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COVER PAINTING: William Scott’s large (5'3'' x 5'8½'') Mars Reds, recently purchased from the Sao Paulo Biennale by the Art Gallery of Western Australia. We thank the Director and Board of the Gallery for their kind permission to reproduce it.

William Scott was born in 1913, and taught for some years at the Bath Academy of Art. Until fairly recently he was, in England, pretty well a “painter’s painter”, though highly regarded on the Continent for his wryly witty, lovingly exasperated, elegantly indecorous still-lives of humble kitchen utensils. He is, one might say, the Samuel Beckett of painting. During the past two years, he has received belated general recognition as one of England’s leading (and least parochial) painters. This is indicated by the recent articles on him in London Magazine (June, 1961), Motif (February, 1962), and Studio (August, 1962).
**westerly**

*edited by J. M. S. O'BRIEN and I. M. BRUMBY*

*assistant editor SALLY TRETHOWAN*

*with the help of John A. Hay and Eugene Schlusser*


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOYAGE TO DISASTER</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>H. Drake-Brockman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YAGAN THE PATRIOT</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alexandra Hasluck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PRIEST WHO RODE AWAY</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mary Durack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO EACH A DREAM</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Donald Stuart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PORTRAIT</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>John K. Ewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Peter Cowan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LEFT HAND</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Griffith Watkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P O E T R Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVICE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Vivian Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONYA’S TOYS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>P. W. Jeffery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUCH NONSENSE</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Olive Pell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATER</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>David Rowbotham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WINTER WALK</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>R. A. Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUNG CALLISTO</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Thomas W. Shapcott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PLEASURE OF PRINCES</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>A. D. Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A GENERAL MUCH TIRED OF WAR</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>P. W. Jeffery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE REFUGEE</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>M. Levene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WARNING</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>James McAuley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERRY-GO-ROUND</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>James McAuley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAGASAKI</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Charles Higham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO FUNERALS</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Vincent Buckley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHERITANCES</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Thomas W. Shapcott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE COCK ON SAINT OSWALD’S SPIRE</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Griffith Watkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RAINDROPS CANNOT MINGLE</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Olive Pell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CEILING</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Alexander Craig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A TWENTIETH CENTURY MAN</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>David Rowbotham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SCHOLAR</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>J. M. S. O’Brien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE ON IMAGES</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Vivian Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN HOSPITAL</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Gwen Harwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE WOUND</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Gwen Harwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MY FATHER’S DEATH</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>R. A. Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR ALEXANDER CRAIG</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>R. A. Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPITAPH FOR A FAILED FREE-VERSE POET</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>J. M. S. O’Brien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVERIE</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Griffith Watkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A R T A N D A R C H I T E C T U R E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWELVE ARTISTS</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Patrick Hutchings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE TOM COLLINS BEQUEST</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Allan Edwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ARTS OF LIFE</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Catherine H. Berndt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVERAL DEADLY DOGMAS OF MODERN ART</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Tom Gibbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECTURAL CHALLENGE</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Cyril Brown and Patrick Hutchings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEATRE</td>
<td>LONDON STAGES 1961</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSIC</td>
<td>MUSIC AND THE UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENT AND CRITICISM</td>
<td>AUSTRIAN PoET AND SETTLER — TOUCHE OR SENTIMENTAL</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A MID-VICTORIAN FAUST</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THE FORTUNES OF RICHARD MAHONEY</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A PHILOSOPHICAL NOTE</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THE ALIENATED BIG ANIMAL</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

Plates: Between Pages 64-65.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TORBAY (Colour)</td>
<td>Guy Grey-Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAND'S END (CLIFFS OF FALL) (Colour)</td>
<td>Tom Gibbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIAL</td>
<td>Margaret Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRUCIFIX (Detail)</td>
<td>Margaret Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRUCIFIX</td>
<td>Margaret Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADONNA AND CHILD (Detail)</td>
<td>Kathleen O'Connor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATERLILIES (Colour)</td>
<td>Kathleen O'Connor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PINK NURSE (Colour)</td>
<td>Kathleen O'Connor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'HEURE DU THE</td>
<td>Geoffrey Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURNING OFF</td>
<td>Cyril Lander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ROCK</td>
<td>Ernest Philpot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLEEPING BRIDGE</td>
<td>Brian McKay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOONDINE HILL</td>
<td>Robert Juniper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LANDSCAPE MERREDDIN</td>
<td>Elizabeth Durack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEITMOTIF (Colour)</td>
<td>Elizabeth Durack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATHERING WIND</td>
<td>Rhoda Boissevain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAISY BOISSEVAIN</td>
<td>William Boissevain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTRAIT OF ROBERT JUNIPER</td>
<td>Sydney Nolan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WINDY PLAINS (CAPE YORK PENINSULA)</td>
<td>Sydney Nolan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PERISH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John C. Hawes

GERALDTON CATHEDRAL; UTAKARA CEMETERY; THE HIGH ALTAB, MULLEWA; ST. MARY'S, MULLEWA; ST. MARY'S, NORTHAMPTON.

by Aboriginal Artists

CEREMONIAL SCENE; FRESH WATER TURTLES; BARRAMUNDI; SCENE FROM THE SACRED WAWALAG MYTH;

POST FIGURE OF THE ELDER WAWALAG SISTER

**ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SKETCH-MAP OF KING SOUND</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRUSADERS: Fabric design by HELEN GREY-SMITH</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKETCH-MAP: THE CHURCHES OF MGR. J. C. HAWES</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAN OF ST. MARY'S, MULLEWA</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial Note

As this is “WESTERLY’s” first issue as a Literary Quarterly in a new format, we have allowed ourselves the expansiveness and indulgence of a large issue to mark the occasion. Subsequent “WESTERLY’s”, while preserving this same format, will be smaller (a hundred pages or thereabouts).

The new look of “WESTERLY” is not the result of any sudden metamorphosis: it is, rather, the sign of maturity after a long adolescence. The size of the magazine, and the variety in material and in outlook to be found in its pages, are compelling arguments for the need for a regular journal of this kind in Western Australia, and for its addition to Australian cultural life.

These arguments are reinforced emphatically when it is considered that the wealth of material and writing talent we found available meant the abandonment of our original plan to make this issue representative of some particular aspect of the Australian, or of the West Australian scene. This issue is an inadequate indication of creative and critical activity in Western Australia, and the poetry contributions alone are, to some slight degree, indicative of contemporary Australian poetry.

“WESTERLY” was started by students of the Arts Union of the University of Western Australia; it was continued by them, and so far has been financed by them. It has published many student contributions, and in its maturity will be available to student submissions of high quality. However, it cannot, in its expansion, continue to be wholly financed by what is the most impecunious section of the community—its students. Nor can anyone reasonably expect it to be so financed.

The artists, the writers, and the critics are available, and there is no lack of material. We confidently look forward to a future yielding four issues a year of the scope of this first quarterly number.

It is surely the responsibility of the governmental, municipal, and local authorities, the educational establishments and the cultural bodies of the community to provide the support which will allow “WESTERLY” to continue its existence as Western Australia’s first Literary Quarterly.

Acknowledgements

At our every request we have received the generous help of many people. The assistance of staff members of various faculties within the University of Western Australia, particularly those in the departments of English and Philosophy, has been invaluable. Professor Allan Edwards has allowed us the use of the office facilities of his Department and the work of its staff has been vital to “WESTERLY’s” appearance on time. The response from contributors has been immediate and generous. The Director and Deputy Director of the West Australian Art Gallery have allowed us the use of many blocks of paintings reproduced in “WESTERLY” and have helped with the cover picture. The magazine “THE ARCHITECT” has permitted us to use the blocks for photographic reproduction of the Margaret Priest sculptures which first appeared in their Christmas 1961 number. The Geraldton Tourist Bureau has placed every facility at our disposal for the article on Mgr. Hawes’ churches. John Hay, retiring President and Nigel Prescott, President-elect of the Arts Union of the University of Western Australia, have given us every administrative assistance and the University Bookshop some financial help in the production of this issue. We wish here to thank all of these people.
H. Drake-Brockman

Voyage To Disaster

An Extract

To be published by Angus and Robertson in 1963, Voyage to Disaster, is the first fully documented account of the life of Francisco Pelsaert and the wreck of the Dutch ship Batavia off the coast of Western Australia in 1629. The full text of Pelsaert’s Journals and other documents included were translated from the original Old Dutch by E. D. Drok. The following extract deals with the voyage. Source references and other notes have been omitted.

The murders on the Abrolhos Islands

WHEN Pelsaert landed at Amsterdam from India in June, 1628, he must have been amazed. Despite the cessation of the Twelve Years’ Truce with Spain and the restless state of Europe, embroiled still in the endless battles of the Thirty Years’ war, the great port was secure, serene, and busy—busy beyond the dreams of the first years of the century. A generation had passed since the initial ships had returned with their valuable cargoes from the Indies: wealth had poured into the Netherlands, new inventions, new amenities, new ideas, had enriched the lives of all in the ten years of his absence. Wharves, ships, streets, houses, had multiplied. A hundred thousand people lived at Amsterdam. Across
the river Scheldt, in Pelsaert's home town of Antwerp, despite the empty streets which still lay desolate, trade drained away by the yet-unmoved barriers the Hollanders had thrown across the river in their struggle for freedom, the artist Rubens, himself luxurious, was recording forever the colour and texture of the magnificent existence of wealthy men and their beautiful wives. In Amsterdam the merchants were no less magnificent, but they walked with zest through a bustling city; whilst the people en masse were well-clothed, well-fed, filled with the same spirit of enterprise as the busy merchants. What a contrast, Pelsaert must have thought, to the India he had recently left and written about, where the princes lolled in their palaces and the wretched peasants often enough sold their children into slavery in order to subsist.

Despite his assurance to van den Broecke that he would not consider re-engagement or return to India, Pelsaert spent barely five months in the Netherlands. His brother-in-law Hendrick Brouwer was still one of the High and Mighty Seventeen: an elected representative of the Chamber of Amsterdam on the governing body of the V.O.C. [The United East India Company of the Netherlands]. He was also greatly involved in general politics. It was common talk in Europe that the policies of the Directors of the V.O.C. and those of the States-General were so intermixed as to be inextricable. Brouwer was destined to become Governor-General at Batavia in 1632; it is probable that he already had this possibility in mind, or even under discussion. He must have read and approved Pelsaert's Indian report. The chances are that, quite apart from family considerations, he was not at all inclined to let the Company lose such an able servant. But whatever the persuasion or the reason, October saw Pelsaert once again ready to set sail for the Indies, with greatly increased responsibilities and glowing prospects.

A contemporary skipper of the V.O.C., Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe, has left a vivid and detailed account of a voyage to the Indies and back. It began in 1618 (the same year that Pelsaert first set out for the East) and ended in 1625 after many disasters and adventures—so many that even today the Dutch refer to an ill-fated enterprise as "like Bontekoe's". He left the Texel in December. He was a little late, and his worry about winds is evident. He gives fascinating sidelights.

The wind being now N.W. we bore eastwards to make the Cape of Bonesperance [Good Hope]. After holding this course for some time we saw black-speckled gulls of which occasionally we caught some, with sticks covered with a piece of fat and hooks to them, and so pulled them into the ship by way of pastime. The sight of these gulls is a token of the cape of Bonesperance being near, for they followed us to the Cape. But there is a trustworthy sign that the Cape be near or that you be at the height thereof, to wit: When you find the compass to hold straight south and North, then look out for land. We did prove this and saw land, namely the Cape of Bonesperance, yet the wind was so strong from the West that we ran with a reefed foresail and durst not attempt to land. Therefore we called the ship's council together and resolved to sail past the Cape, having all our men in good health and no want of water, so we let her go before the wind and continued our way.

This was the last of May being five months after we sailed from Holland.

In 1629 Pelsaert's fleet was at least a month earlier at the Cape, and entered Table Bay. His ships were cleaned, he went ashore to buy meat for the convoy from the Hottentots (so called by the Netherlanders because the sound of their speech was said to resemble a duck quacking). Passengers and crew relaxed. But here, for the first fully-recorded time, trouble flared openly between Pelsaert [who was Uppermerchant and had been appointed in overall command of this convoy] and Batavia's skipper, Ariaen Jacobsz. What happened, what was said, was destined to be taken down by Pelsaert him-

WESTERLY
self months later, when given in evidence at the Abrolhos trials over which he presided.

A drunken spree of the skipper’s ended in a sharp reprimand from the Commandeur [title given merchant in charge as Pelsaert was]. Ariaen’s banked-up hate now exploded into a plan for mutiny, given greater violence by a passion he had conceived for Zwaantie Hendrix, the maidservant of one of the passengers named Lucretia Jansz, a “fair” young woman who was travelling to Java to join her husband, Boudewijn van der Mijlen, an undermerchant with the Company. Originally, Ariaen had molested the mistress; repulsed, he became infatuated with the maid. A third party to their desires and schemes was soon found in the undermerchant Jeronimus Cornelisz, thirty years of age, and ambitious, an astute schemer who had once practised as an apothecary at Haarlem, where he had been the friend of artists. Ariaen Jacobsz recklessly decided to sail the Batavia away from the other ships as soon as they left the Cape.

Fate played into his hands. They were scarcely clear of Agulhas than a storm arose. The Batavia ran away from the convoy apparently by the Will of God. In addition, Pelsaert became very ill from whatever malady he had contracted in India, and the barber expected him to die. But he did not die. Accordingly the skipper created an “incident” designed to force Pelsaert to take harsh disciplinary measures bound to alienate the sailors. Ariaen Jacobsz recklessly decided to pose as a defender of his crew, while the mutiny would be sprung at the same time, the impetus given by several malcontents amongst the soldiers, already enlisted in the plot. Pelsaert clearly endured days of mental torture, racking his mind as to what action he could best take to uncloak and punish the “incident” offenders, painfully aware that the understeersman happened to be the skipper’s brother-in-law and that one of the petty officers was his cousin—doubtless uncertain whether the Commandeur would find the ship’s council solidly behind him if once again he openly reprimanded the skipper. The ship Batavia drove steadily eastwards towards the reefs of Houtman’s Abrolhos. The skipper himself took over the night watch. All was in order; when he gave the word, his terrible plan could erupt in a sleeping ship and himself alone command action. But “God the Lord did not wish to suffer that extraordinary bad evil, but rather let the ship be wrecked”. Grown careless in his calculations Ariaen Jacobsz piled Batavia on a reef—in a wreck that three centuries later remains notorious amongst maritime disasters.

Within twenty-four hours Pelsaert found himself faced by an even more ferocious dilemma. Should he stay with the survivors, landed on two waterless specks he knew not where, or should he depart with the skipper and his chosen crew in search of water and succour? He had small faith in the skipper’s will to save any lives other than those of the boat’s crew and his own, or in his undertaking to return with water should it be found. Pelsaert played for time. He pointed out that rain might fall, the seas abate, food be salvaged from the wreck, so that he, the Commandeur, might leave with easier mind. Ariaen Jacobsz remained implacable: he would go immediately. The Commandeur could go with him, or remain. Still ignorant of the now delayed mutiny plot, or that Ariaen planned to kill him, Pelsaert, practically kidnapped, reluctantly accompanied the skipper.

In a letter to Pieter de Carpentier at Amsterdam, Antonie van Diemen reports from Batavia the arrival of Pelsaert and the skipper Ariaen Jacobsz in the largest of the Batavia’s open boats. In less than four weeks they had travelled nearly two thousand miles from the wreck, skirting the formidable coast of the unknown Southland and crossing to Java. Eventually they were picked up in the Straits of Sunda by the yacht Sardam (which, it will be re-
called, had sailed from the Netherlands with Pelsaert's fleet). But they passed on (Pelsaert insisting) to another Company ship in the vicinity. This was the Fredrick Houtman, on which the Hon. Crijn Raemburch (a high official of the V.O.C.) was sailing to Java. Van Diemen wrote:

By God's truth, the ship Batavia, with its full cargo despatched from the Fatherland to India, is on the 4th June 1629 come out of its course, with a clear and full moon, on the Southland 28 1/3 degrees, and has been knocked to pieces on the dry [reefs] of Houtman; the Commandeur Francisco Pelsaert, the skipper of ditto ship, Capn. Hans Jacobsz., the uppersteersman and more other officers in total 48 and amongst them two women [one was Zwaantie] and a child of 3 months, have arrived here on the 7th July with the boat of the ditto ship, reporting that the rest of the people 250 souls, amongst them 30 women and children, have been left on certain small islands over which the sea breaks at high water, situated about 8-10 miles [i.e. 24-30 English miles] from the continent, being in the utmost misery, to perish shortly from thirst and hunger; upon what consideration the Commandeur Pelsaert has separated himself from those desolate people and in the end decided to come to Batavia, and what resulted from all that, Your Hon. will be so good as to hear from his written statement.

The 15th July following on that, the yacht Sardam has been sent thither with the Commandeur Pelsaert in the hope of rescuing some people and goods, as apparently in the first place the people, a casket with jewels valued at f. 29, 409, 15—were salvaged on the small island, and 4 chests of Cash have had buoys put on them. What orders have been given to the Commandeur Pelsaert, Your Hon. may see from the letter book of the 15th July 1629. So far the mentioned one he's not returned, may God grant he can do something useful.

Considerable disorder and insolvency had occurred on the said ship Batavia, of which the skipper has been no small cause; the Highboatswain Jan Devertsz of Mimmickendam has been hanged on the gallows on account of the mishandling [mishandelinge] on ditto ship of Lucretia van Mijlen, wife of Boudewijn van der Mijle.

The skipper himself was on watch when the ship grounded, being, according to his reckoning, so far from land that one would not think to look out, and thinking that the spray from the sea was the glare of the moon. Proper proceedings have been taken against the skipper, but it will be of little comfort to the Compy., such a beautiful retour ship with 250 thous. guilders in Cash, as well as so much rich merchandise and victuals, so carelessly neglected, and so many poor people brought into the danger of death; may the Almighty make good the damage to the Comp. and may he have helped the miserable distressed people.

Pelsaert's Journals written from the time of the wreck until the return of the Sardam with the survivors on December 5th (with the exception of the week he spent in Batavia from July 7th - 15th) give a day by day account of his own experiences. They also include the full record of evidence given at the Abrolhos trials, thus disclosing as far as possible all that happened at the islands during his absence. Earlier writers have sometimes wondered why no similar record remains of Batavia's voyage from Holland, as both skippers and merchants in charge were required to keep such records; and Pelsaert must undoubtedly have noted any incidents that might ultimately have had some bearing on the subsequent mutiny. Full translation of the trials' evidence has supplied the reason: all documents, including Pelsaert's records, were thrown overboard after the wreck by rioting members of the ship's company.

Apart from the Order given by the Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen and already mentioned by van Diemen, the following record of proceedings provides a picture of Pelsaert making his disastrous report to the Council of India at Batavia and lists the decisions taken thereon: from which can readily be deduced how urgently he must have been occupied during that week in Java.

Monday the 9th July 1629. Also informed by the commandeur Francisco Pelsaert (arrived here on 7th inst. with the boat of the ship Battavia [sic] from the
Southland) that on 4 June last on Houtmans Abrolhos [sic] situated between 28 and 29 degrees about 9 miles [i.e. 27] west of the land of Eendracht the aforesaid ship Battavia was wrecked and that it had run off its course at high tide, with 12 feet of water at the bow and 18 feet at the poop, being coral ground, and that 180 souls therefrom, whereof 30 odd were women and children, and a casket with jewels were landed on a certain coral reef, that there was not any fresh water at that place and that they had not more than 13 barrels of ships’ biscuit with them; that 12 or 13 persons were drowned and that 70 souls were still on the ship when they [Pelsaert and the skipper] had sailed off with the boat (in which 48 persons, whereof 2 were women and one child) in search of water; that the ship had burst and was full of water; that at several places they had been ashore in order to dig for fresh water so that they might have provided those left on the small island, but that they had not been able to find it, whereupon they had resolved amongst themselves to set course to Battavia [sic] because they saw that it would not be possible to salvage anything more from the wrecked ship, because of the daily rough weather.

It was put forward by His Hon. to the Council, since it was apparent that it was possible that some of the people and also some of the goods might be saved and salvaged, whether it was not advisable that they should be sent thither with a suitable yacht to find out what could be done. The Council having taken notice of the proposal of His Hon., it was found good on an unanimity of voices, and it was resolved to despatch the yacht Sardam, arrived here from the Fatherland on the 7th inst., to provide the same with provisions, water, extra cables and anchors, and to send back thither Francisco Pelsart [sic], commandeur of the wrecked ship Battavia [sic], with a crew of 26, amongst them a few Guseratten [Indian divers from Gujarat] in order to dive for the goods with the express order to return hither as soon as possible after having done everything for the saving of the people and the salvaging of the goods and cash.

Pelsaert’s accusation of the skipper, combined with statements later made by several of the Batavia’s company who had been in the open boat, had already brought action:

Because Adriaen [sic] Jacobsz, skipper of the wrecked ship Battavia is notorious through allowing himself to be blown away by pure neglect; and also because through his doings a gross evil and public assault has taken place on the same ship, on the widow of the late Boudewijn van der Mijl, in his life undermerchant, it has been decided by His Hon. and the Council to arrest the mentioned skipper and to bring him to trial here in order that he may answer those accusations made to his detriment.

Thus was the skipper arrested before Pelsaert left for the Abrolhos in the yacht Sardam, hastily unloaded and re-fitted as a salvage ship under the command of the uppersteersman Jacob Jacobsz. Class Gerritzs, uppersteersman of the Battavia, and Jacob Jansz, one of his understeersmen, evidently still in sufficiently good health to be likely to prove of use in the search, also returned. Attention should be directed here to the death of Lucretia’s husband, known as a fact in Batavia. The loss of this officer is not mentioned anywhere in Pelsaert’s Journals nor is there ever other mention of his being aboard the ship Battavia. This reference makes it quite clear that he was not amongst those left at the islands, as their fate was still undisclosed.

The Sardam sailed two days later. In his Order of Sunday, July 15th, Coen, always the stern upholder of religious observance, has written:

Shalt therefore set sail tomorrow in the name of God, and shalt hasten thy journey with all possible diligence in order to arrive most speedily at the place where thou has lost the ship and left the people.

Undoubtedly a stab, that sentence, despite the arrest of the skipper; perhaps it served to strengthen Pelsaert’s determination to be gone at once. More probably he needed nothing more than the Order safe in his hands and the Sardam ready to weigh; at any rate he did not wait for the morrow; Sunday notwithstanding, he cleared from Batavia on 15th, as his Journal shows.
Little did he guess of the ordeal ahead. They had sailed from the Abrolhos to Batavia in an open boat in thirty days; how could he imagine that it would take them sixty-five days to return in a fast ship? The Sardam was listed as a flute in the official notice of sailing from Amsterdam, but she is more generally referred to as a yacht. Since she was selected as the rescue vessel, there can be little doubt that she was chosen, at least partly, for her known speed. Moreover, even though the long weeks must have reduced her small crew to bitter anxiety, not one of them feared other than natural disaster for the unfortunates for whose sakes they were battling against relentless head winds. No rain, no water, no food; sickness and accident—that would be the refrain torturing their thoughts. But doubtless they comforted themselves with recollections and tales of other great calamities (notably Willem Bontekoe's) from which many had been saved.

At last, on September 17th, they anchored in the lee of one of the “high” islands of the Abrolhos that Pelsaert and Gerritsz had searched more than three months earlier for water. Smoke was arising from another island to the south. Their spirits were high. They dared to expect to find the majority of their erstwhile shipmates alive and perhaps well. Instead, they were soon to listen to one of the most terrible stories of murder and rapine in the annals of the sea. Thus Pelsaert's able pen was forced, not to "keep a perfect journal", like an explorer taking "notice of lands, shallows, cliffs, inlets, bays and capes which mayest encounter and discover" as directed by Coen in his Order, but to set down for the Directors at Amsterdam and for posterity (as chairman of a disciplinary council), the grim evidence of a series of crimes without parallel in V.O.C. records.

The illustration at the beginning of this extract is taken from the Ongeluckige Voyagie van 't Schip Batavia nae de Oost-Indien, an account published as a horror tale in Amsterdam by Jan Jansz in 1647. The story is told in the third person but was obviously abstracted from Pelsaert's Journals.

Advice

This is one season of the heart's dismay when life is like a strident conversation; words pretend there's something left to say when silence simply covers consternation.

Discordant season: moments of despair: we glimpse the cracks that run all through our lives; the heart we lightly thought rich and austere; the mind's disordered drawer of borrowed knives.

Don't run with words. Don't seek them. Words aren't wise. The mind's eclipses move to prove its suns. And nudity of all is best disguise: stay bare in stillness. . . . Vanity runs.

VIVIAN SMITH

This poem is to appear in Australian Poetry 1962.
SOME time ago, members of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, while waiting for a meeting of the Council to begin, began to discuss who would be considered the most noteworthy West Australian a hundred years hence. One name and another was suggested, and then Sir John Kirwan, the President, offered the name of Yagan the aborigine, known to the early settlers as ‘the Wallace of the Age’. In the stunned silence that followed this suggestion, the shadowy figure of the Highland chieftain Wallace, of whom most of the members had a vague idea, met in their minds an even more indistinct shade—Yagan the native patriot, unknown to history, of whom no Burns had sung.

"Why don't you," said one of the Council members to me, “write about Yagan the Patriot?”

I must confess that while I knew a little about Yagan, it had not occurred to me to think of him as a patriot. The definition of a patriot is, one who defends or is zealous for his country's freedom or rights. How did Yagan measure up to this? And how did he come to be known as ‘the Wallace of the Age’?

YAGAN—whose name is sometimes spelt Eagan or Yegan, indicating that the a was not a broad a—flourished on these wild shores up to the year 1833. He was the son of Midgigoroo, who was chief of the tribe in the district of Beeliar. Beeliar took in the far side of the Swan River lying between the Canning, Fremantle and Woodman’s Point. It was a large area of land, and the tribe was large, as tribes went, numbering some 58 persons, but there is some doubt as to whether it was not two tribes. Next to this district was Beeloo; as we might say, South Perth and Victoria Park across to the hills. Its chief was named Munday, and his tribe numbered 32. The north side of the Swan River was called Mooro, and its chief was Yellagonga, with a tribe of 28 persons. It will be noted that these numbers are not large. They were set down, together with many names of members of the tribes, with painstaking care in 1837 by Francis Armstrong, who then held the post of Native Interpreter; and they are corroborated by other early settlers, such as Captain F. C. Irwin in his book, State and Position of W.A., published in 1835, who speaks of the tribes between Swan River, Augusta and King George’s Sound as not exceeding 1000 souls; and G. F. Moore, who refers in his Diary in 1831 to the natives not being very numerous. This is contrary to the current idea which has gained ground that the aborigines flourished in large numbers before the beginning of settlement and that their numbers were decimated after the advent of the colonists.

When the first Englishmen arrived to settle on these shores under the command of Captain James Stirling, they might have expected, from the experiences of colonizing forces in America, Canada, South Africa and other places, to be met by a hostile mass of native inhabitants keen to defend their country and opposed to the coming of the white men. That the English did expect attack from hostile native tribes is shown by Stirling’s Proclamation issued at Perth on 18 June 1829, taking possession of the territory of Western Australia. This asserted that there might be need to form a Militia force to assist the regular troops in the defence of law and
property if they were assailed by the aborigines; while at the same time it warned settlers that the aborigines were now British subjects, even if unknown to themselves, and that cruelty and felony against them would be prosecuted. Alerted though the settlers were, nothing happened. The only sign of hostility was experienced by some officers of H.M.S. Challenger and Sulphur, who had landed at Woodman's Point one day to be greeted by a solitary native with "a furious and wholly unprovoked demonstration of everything but amity and kindness . . ." This may have been Yagan himself, appearing in defence of his land, for this was his district. No further demonstrations occurred, however, and Captain Stirling and his fellow civil servants immediately became very busy setting up the administration and looking to the needs of the settlers which were many and pressing. They gave little thought to the natives while the latter remained peaceful, and this was the case at first, no untoward events occurring in the first nine months. A despatch of Stirling’s dated 30 January 1830, only the second to be written, does not mention natives at all. During that time the first little cottages began to arise in Fremantle and Perth; families settled there, established their livestock and put in their gardens. Peeping through the surrounding trees, the aborigines watched them. Gardens did not interest them, the living things did.

It is a habit nowadays to say that the colonists took the aborigines’ land and killed off their food supply, the native animals. But the actual fact was the very reverse. In the crucial first years, it was the natives (after they had discovered that they liked the taste) who killed, or drove off, or stole, the scanty food supplies of the settlers, their animals and birds, their stocks of flour and sugar, while the indigenous kangaroo, duck, swan and fish flourished abundantly. Even the genial G. F. Moore wished sadly that they would not steal his pigs, while many a small settler, when he saw his few but self-replacing cattle and sheep killed, and knew that his small capital was gone, and he and his young family far from home, suffered violent feelings toward the thieves, and found it hard to control his trigger finger. Why could they not eat their own food, he must have wondered.

Ten months after settlement, on 3 May 1830, the first clash between natives and colonists is reported by Captain Irwin of the 63rd Regiment. The natives had speared poultry and rifled a house, the settlers had defended their property, the military had chased the offenders and fired over their heads. No-one was killed, but this was the beginning of trouble. By 1831, Stirling in a despatch to Lord Goderich mentions “the pertinacious endeavours of the Savages to commit Depredations on Property having called forth the determined Resistance of the Settlers . . .”, and says that in three or four instances, lives of white persons were sacrificed.

YAGAN first appears on the threshold of history in 1832. Up to that time, though he had been active enough, he was not known by name, the natives being scarcely distinguishable as individuals to the settlers, who were, however, gradually becoming aware that attacks on property and person on the Canning River and further banks of the Swan were led by a certain native of striking appearance. In May 1832, the murder of a man named Gaze occurred, and the native concerned was identified by the survivor of the attack as Yagan, the son of Midgigoroo, who also was identified as concerned in several recent attacks. A reward of £20 was set on the head of Yagan, but he eluded capture for four months, until September, when he was seen by three men who were fishing in a boat on the river. They enticed him into their boat by offering him and his two companions some bread. Greed prevailed over caution, as it so often did with the
blacks; Yagan and his mates were overpowered and conveyed to Perth. An eyewitness says: “I happened to be passing through Perth at the very moment when they were carried bound to the guardhouse, amidst a conourse of people who were running from all parts to see them . . .” which would seem to show that Yagan had already achieved some fame as a person to be dreaded. The prisoners were then transferred to Fremantle gaol—the building now known as the Round House—while the Executive Council deliberated on their fate.

Many settlers by this time had given a good deal of earnest consideration to the problem of how to deal with the aborigines, their continuous thieving, and the reprisals and revenge that followed their depredations. A meeting held at Guildford on 26 June 1832, was of the opinion that settlers might as well abandon the colony if their property could not be protected, but the resolutions finally formulated by the meeting were very mild in tone, ending in a suggestion that an agent be appointed to go among the natives to study and conciliate them. This had been pressed time and time again at other gatherings and in private conversation by a Scottish settler named Robert Lyon. He had begun by asking that the Church Missionary Society be asked to send missionaries to impart Christian principles to the natives, but while waiting for this to happen, he had felt that nothing could really be achieved until a knowledge of native language and habits was acquired, and had set out to acquire it. After the capture of Yagan, when the Executive Council decided that Yagan and his fellow prisoners be sent to Carnac Island for a period, in charge of two soldiers, one of the Council members, J. S. Roe, recommended that Mr. Lyon (who had volunteered his services) should be sent with them to study their ways and speech.

Lyon, as he preferred to call himself, for one senses he liked the heraldic overtones, was somewhat of a character, with an unfortunate gift of annoying those in authority. He peppered the Colonial Office in London with extremely well-written letters containing lengthy descriptions of the colony, its settling and government, and the treatment of the native people—whom he described as a harmless liberal, kind-hearted race, in simplicity of manners, generosities of disposition and firmness of character much resembling the ancient Caledonians—until he was politely requested not to trouble to continue his correspondence.

On going to Carnac Island with Yagan, Dommera and Ningina, as he gives the names of the prisoners, all sons of chiefs, he says (writing to the Governor), that he un-ironed them and gave them their freedom, allowing them spears for fishing to divert their minds from the terror of their supposed fate. In what might be regarded as wishful thinking, he says that Yagan had been seen more than once on his knees, which made him suppose that the aborigines had religious notions. Yagan, he says, seemed to have the best capacity but the most violent temper of the three. None of them would assist in the digging of a well to get water. On the first Sabbath Lyon assembled them for divine service, and “Carnac, probably for the first time since creation, heard the sound of prayer . . .”. He was a master of the vivid phrase: Carnac, a bare rock off an arid coast, is the essence of the primeval.

A week later, he reports that one of the soldiers was ordering the natives to work when Yagan, not having quite finished his breakfast, thought it rather too unceremonious a proceeding towards the son of a prince, and refused. The soldier went to get handcuffs and Yagan, on seeing them, seized his spear. The soldier then ran for his musket, while Lyon who had watched the incident, went up to Yagan to disarm him, although afraid of the native’s fierce anger.
Lyon was able to learn a great deal of the native language and of the geography of their country from the prisoners; this was when he ascertained the different districts and their chiefs as quoted earlier; but in the learning of their language and ways, he realised how long a time it would take to teach the aborigines civilization. This was from one who had the greatest hopes of them. He also thought they were filthy beyond belief in their personal habits, and took great heart when they appeared to become cleaner and more orderly, and respectful at divine service. One cannot help thinking he was very optimistic, but then, by the records, most of the settlers were optimistic about the natives to begin with.

Yagan and his companions were on Carnac for six weeks. At the end of that time, whether while they were on their knees or not, they had done their share of observation. They had been visited by J. Morgan, the colonial storekeeper, who found them 'clothed and in outward appearance very much like civilized beings', but just after that, while Lyon and the soldiers were asleep, Yagan and his friends went softly to the Government boat, anchored in the small bay of the island, unmoored it and pulled away for Woodman's Point, a distance of some six miles. "When it is born in mind," says Morgan, "that these people knew nothing of a boat, had never been in one before they went to the island and they must have carefully watched the movements of every person who visited Carnac, in order that they might be able to know how to effect their escape when an opportunity offered—I know not which to admire most, their ingenuity or their courage."

Yagan's escape was a great disappointment for his mentor and interrogator, Robert Lyon. That worthy returned to Perth, and went into the bush alone, unarmed, and met Yellagonga, chief of Mooro, who gave him assurances of peace and friendship, and presented him with a womera and a spear. "Of all the chiefs here mentioned," Lyon says in a series of articles which he contributed to the *Perth Gazette* in the following year on the habits and vocabulary of the natives, "Yellagonga is the most distinguished for a humane peaceable disposition. And yet he is a man of the most martial courage. When he is fully aroused, no warrior, not even Yagan, dare stand before him. To him the settlers are greatly indebted for the protection of their lives and property."

Yellagonga must now take the stage for a moment. In comparison to Yagan, he was 'quiet and inoffensive', as Lyon in another place refers to him. He never appears in records as the cause of any trouble, though two of his wives, Yangan and Windan, were notorious thieves, nor did he try conclusions with Yagan, who was inclined to usurp his prerogatives and trespass on his tribal grounds. If Lyon had not borne witness to Yellagonga's martial valour, one might have thought him craven. He did, however, manage to live on until 1843, at peace with the colonists, apparently respected and known by them as 'the King of Perth'. Under that title the newspaper *The Perth Gazette*, referred to him when he died. It said: "The mild amiable Yellagonga, acknowledged by the natives as the possessor of vast tracts of land between Perth and Fremantle, is no more. He fell from a rock on the river's bank and was drowned."

Thanks to Yellagonga, Perth proper, the centre of his district, did not suffer the attacks and murders of the other districts. It is a pity that more is not known of him, for obviously he deserves credit as a native who learnt how to co-exist with the whites.

Yagan, who had returned to his old haunts, was by tacit consent of authority left undisturbed for a time. He himself seems to have boasted of his cleverness in escaping from his island prison, for the *Perth Gazette* mentions that "the chuckling style in which Yagan gives us to un-
derstand the manner in which they effected their escape from Carnac is highly amusing”.

In January 1833, he expressed a wish to meet two natives from King George’s Sound who had been brought to Perth, and they were taken by Ensign Dale to meet him on the shores of Monger’s Lake. Shortly after Dale and Manyat and Gallipert had arrived, Yagan and about ten of his tribe made their appearance well-armed (for it should be realised they were out of their own district and on Yellagonga’s territory), and welcomed the visitors cordially. To the great interest of the whites, a corroboree was danced, followed by an interchange of names and spears. Neither party of natives seemed to understand the other’s language, but derived their meaning from gestures. A trial of skill in throwing spears then took place between Gallipert and Yagan. The latter struck down a walking stick vertically placed at a distance of 25 yards—no mean feat. Yagan was also credited by Dale with the power to bury the whole head of his spear in the hard wood of a gum tree from a distance of 60 yards.

The meeting continued for about four hours. During that time, much conversation took place between the two lots of natives, the gist of which is said to have been (though it should be remembered that not much was known yet of the native language) a description of King George’s Sound district, of the kind treatment Manyat and Gallipert had received from the white people, and an exhortation to Yagan and his followers to conduct themselves in a friendly and peaceable manner towards the whites. Yagan appeared to give a description of his late imprisonment on Carnac and his escape, and what he considered to be his connection with the whites.

On 3 March 1833, a corroboree was held by the Swan River and King George’s Sound men at dusk. The Governor was there, and most of the population of Perth, including several venturesome ladies. Yagan was Master of Ceremonies, and according to eye-witnesses, acquitted himself with infinite dignity and grace. If he had only stuck to the dance, all would have been well; but on 6 April, there is a report of his entering the house of a Mrs. Watson and frightening her into running to a neighbour’s because of his violence. Nor could he be found afterwards. At the end of April, having returned to his tribal grounds on the further side of the Swan, he and his tribe visited Fremantle where they received some rations, apparently not enough for their tastes, for they made their way back into the town and stole some flour from a store. They were surprised while doing this and fired at, and one named Domjum, a brother of Yagan, was killed. The rest made off towards the Canning, passing a settler at whom they shouted that they would spear a white man soon! At Bull’s Creek they met a party of settlers loading some carts with provisions. This proceeding they watched intently, asking many questions as to where the carts were going. Then they vanished. The lure of delicious food, the desire for revenge for the death of Domjum, impelled Yagan to his final crime. He and his followers ambushed the leading cart and killed two young men, John and Thomas Velvick, who were in it. The Governor’s report to the Colonial Office following this event says in cold official language that the drivers were ‘murdered with circumstances of great barbarity’, their cries bringing up the owner of the carts, Mr. Phillips of Maddington Farm, in time for him to recognise Yagan in the act of repeatedly plunging his spear into the body of one of the deceased; but the Perth Gazette’s account is more graphic: it describes one body as having over a hundred wounds, while the other was found about two hundred yards away in the bush, where the young man had crawled on his hands and knees for refuge.

This murder, in which not only Yagan,
but also his father Midgigoroo was concerned, occasioned great alarm. The settlers who, according to various accounts, had not much feared the blacks at first, having indeed a kind of tolerant scorn for them, now began to find them treacherous and incalculable. It was easy to understand that they might take revenge when one of their men was killed; it was not easy to understand, as frequent occurrence had shown, that vengeance might be taken not on the person who had done the killing, but on any white person who presented an easy prey, regardless of the fact that this person might have been on very good terms with them. This put all whites, however good their intentions and behaviour, in jeopardy. Something had to be done. On 1 May 1833 a Proclamation was issued, couched in the weighty phrases of the law, outlawing Yagan, Midgigoroo and Munda.

In the four days following the murder several parties of determined men had been out in pursuit of Yagan. Lieutenant Carew and a party of the 63rd regiment were stationed at the flats beyond Perth where they could prevent Yagan from joining the women and children of his tribe. A fortnight later some news of the outlaws must have come in, for Captain Ellis and Mr. Hardey and a party proceeded along the Helena river towards the hills. They went on foot in a wide sweep, each about 10 yards from the others. Captain Ellis caught the first glimpse of a black hardly visible among the deceptive blackboy grass trees, and gave the order, “Right shoulder forward.” Advancing and closing in, they surrounded a native who proved to be Midgigoroo, along with a child about five years old. Jeffers, a private of the 63rd, rushed forward and seized Midgigoroo by the long hair, while Captain Ellis snatched his spears and broke them off, leaving the barbs in his hands, with which he struck desperately at Jeffers, loudly calling for Yagan to come to his rescue. The valley of the Helena echoed his cries, but no Yagan appeared.

Midgigoroo was incarcerated in the Perth lock-up while the courses of the law proceeded. Depositions were taken before the Executive Council relative to certain charges of murder, robbery and assault preferred against him. Of these, the most terrible tale came from a boy of twelve years old, Ralph Entwistle. Two years ago, he said, a party of natives had attacked the house where he lived on the Canning, thrusting their spears through the wattle and daub walls. His father went out and was immediately speared. Ralph saw the tall native, Yagan, throw the first spear, and Midgigoroo the second. When his father fell, Ralph and his younger brother hid under the bed and were not found. He saw an old woman break his father’s legs and cut his head to pieces. His father had always been good to Midgigoroo’s tribe, and had been on good terms with them.

Yount Entwistle must have been shown Midgigoroo to identify him, and we can imagine the old native with dark-bright eyes in side-long glance, the fair-haired child with direct gaze eyeing each other, the past and the future unknowing that each was each.

When Entwistle was taken away, the Executive Council was not long in deciding the fate of the prisoner. Immediately they had reached their conclusions, Captain Irwin went to the lock-up to tell the prisoner their decision. The small native boy captured at the same time was taken away and well cared for; all natives in the vicinity were sent out of sight and sound; and Midgigoroo was led out of the gaol, tied to its outside door, and shot.

But Yagan was still at large. Such was the state of mind of the community that natives were likely to be fired on at sight, as they never had been before. The Governor was obliged to re-issue his earlier proclamation affirming protection for natives, but it did not seem to carry the
same weight. Initial goodwill towards His Majesty’s black subjects had been altered by the actions of Yagan and Midgigoroo.

On 27 May, G. F. Moore, the diarist, whom one must regard as extremely reputable in his narration of facts, met of a sudden what he described as ‘the very spirit of evil himself—the notorious Yagan’. Moore lived on the Upper Swan, and there was Yagan, on Yellagonga’s territory. Munday, the other outlaw, was there too. Moore was a little perturbed on finding himself so close to such desperate characters. When Yagan saw he was recognised, he came forward and began a long speech which Moore, who knew a little of the native language and was later to produce a book on it, deduced to be a defence of his conduct. Moore tried a little logic in reply, to the effect that if white man stole, white man was punished; if black man stole, white man punished black man. The ‘moody chief’, as he called Yagan, stepping forward and placing his left hand on Moore’s shoulder, while gesticulating with his right, delivered a speech looking earnestly into Moore’s face. “I regret that I could not understand him,” says Moore, “but I conjectured from the tone and manner that the purport was this: You came to our country; you have driven us from our haunts, and disturbed us in our occupations; as we walk in our own country we are fired upon by the white men; why should the white men treat us so?”

Did Yagan in fact say this? Did his thoughts run like that? Moore only ‘conjectured’ that that was what he said, but the conjecture denotes a feeling of conscience on the part of the white men. Moore too refers to Yagan as ‘the Wallace of the Tribe’, but the date of this reference in his diary is about a week later than an article by Robert Lyon in the Perth Gazette in which he called Yagan ‘the Wallace of the Age’. It was a title that caught on, but was it justified? Did Yagan commit the ghastly murders he had done as a protest against the white men settling in his land, or did he commit them for the sake of the food to be gained? Did he show any signs of uniting native tribes to resist the settlers as a body? Yellagonga never resorted to Yagan’s tactics, though Munday did.

Whether Moore sympathised with Yagan or not, he felt obliged to send word to the nearest magistrate that Yagan was in his vicinity, but he confessed to his diary: “The truth is, everyone wishes him taken, but no-one likes to be the captor. How could any person, unless a professed blood-hunter, spring upon a man in cold blood, and lead him to the death? How could anyone who has a heart fire upon him treacherously from a secure ambush, though he be an unfeeling and reckless savage? There is something in his daring which one is forced to admire.”

Though Moore could not bring himself to capture Yagan, the hunt went on. Two weeks later, two brothers, James and William Keats, while driving cattle on the Upper Swan, met Yagan and some other natives. Yagan spoke to the Keats boys—they were aged 13 and 18—and stayed with them all the morning, one wonders for what purpose. Then they all joined the other natives who had made a fire and cooked damper. Yagan refused to go any further with the Keats, who, if they tried to persuade him to go on, doubtless had the £30 reward for his capture in mind, and when he became threatening and raised his spear, William Keats cocked his gun and shot him, while James shot Heegan, another native who was shipping his spear. James then ran for his life down to the river where he plunged in out of sight, and turned to see four natives driving their spears into his brother. He escaped and brought help, but William was found to be dead; and so were Heegan and Yagan.

Captain Irwin made an official report to the Colonial Office on the murder of the Velvicks, and on the capture and execution of Midgigoroo, and received from the Sec-
The Secretary of State's letter remarked that the murdered Velvicks should have been more on their guard and they would not have been murdered. It lamented the death of Midgigoroo because this would 'increase the exasperation of his tribe', and it trusted when the other two natives were caught, that capital punishment would not be resorted to. The whole thing, however, was well regarded by the settlers. The Perth Gazette commented: "We look with some degree of curiosity for the result of the death of Yagan, to see whether he has left his sovereign influence to an equally daring successor."

There was an element of Greek tragedy, as G. F. Moore felt, in the life and death of Yagan: an uncivilised being opposed to a force too strong for him and by his own nature bringing calamity upon himself, the Fates contriving that for killing two youths, by two youths he was killed. Nor was a final horror lacking. When his dead body was found, his head was cut off by a settler's servant, hung in a hollow tree and smoked for three months to preserve it. Moore, who saw it before the smoking had started, said the features were well preserved and made a sketch of it, observing that he would have been glad to have the head himself; but Ensign Dale, who apparently took it back to England, says in a small book about the colony, printed in 1834, that the features shrunk very much in the smoking. There is a picture of the head in this very rare booklet, showing Yagan to have had long slightly wavy hair, a small beard and a moustache. The eyes are closed and the nose is more like that of an Indian than of an aborigine, but looks as if the nasal cartilage had shrunk and had been replaced from imagination by the pen of the artist. Moore commented, when he had been sent a copy of Dale's book, that the smoke-dried head bore no resemblance to the living face of Yagan, which was 'plump, with a burly-headed look about it'. The head was submitted by Ensign Dale to T. J. Pentigrew, Esquire, F.R.S., F.S.A., F.L.S., of London to have phenoological observations made about it. These observations fill three printed pages, but do not reveal any more of Yagan's character than his own actions did. Dale calls Yagan 'passionate, implacable and sullen, in short a most complete and untameable savage'. This was a soldier's opinion. Moore, more of a philosopher, saw him as a tragic figure, while Lyon saw him as a hero, and a symbol of a wronged race.

With Yagan dead, native attacks ceased for a while but not for long. Yagan was not, I think, a patriot in the true sense of the word. I doubt very much whether he consciously thought of the white men as invaders, as people who wanted his land. On the evidence it seems more as if he thought of them as people who had something he wanted—food. By his life and deeds, however, by being the striking character he was, he did draw attention to the problem of his people. If the settlers themselves, with their background of civilization, thought of him as a patriot, and to a certain extent they did, as we have seen—then to that extent he was.

Nor, considered as the Wallace that Robert Lyon had called him, was he completely unsung. There is a curious and rather grandiose poem, with more of bathos than of pathos in it, but still denoting that feeling of conscience towards the aborigines which the best of the early settlers had, which was inscribed by one Mr. Trimmer in Lady Stirling's Album sometime in the years between Yagan's death in 1833 and Lady Stirling's departure in 1839. It says:

*Sudden he starts, arising from the dead*  
The ghost of Yagan stands, without a head!  
And thus addressed him in a gutteral note,  
His voice proceeding from his severed throat:  
"Squatter! what brought thee here?"
Did hapless woe, or vile ambition teach
Thy steps to rove? Or worse than these
The cursed love of gold alike the idol of
the young and old,
That crowns the sovereign, forms the noble
star,
Gilds the child’s gingerbread, and glittering
far,
Controls each circumstance of peace and
war,
And adorns the trappings of the bold
hussar,
Send thee, a sordid wanderer to a barren
land
Of rock and stone, of iron-stone and sand?

On the Swan’s banks shall rise no future
home
Nor these light sands support one splendid
dome,
On our rude mountains little else appears,
Than man, and wood, the native and his
spears.”

One cannot help wondering what discus-

tion, what argument between Mr. Trimmer
and Lady Stirling called this poem forth,
to be copied into a dainty feminine scrap
book. Nor can one help wondering in
what dusty English attic, retained like the
head of Oliver Cromwell, or a grisly sacred
relic, rests the head of Yagan now?

Sonya’s Toys

And these things unfolding;
exploding sensation for sight and skin.

As yet not given proper name,
but softness for skin, companion in waterways,
dear warmth of colour, roughness for teeth,
jangling ricochet of plastic on tensile string,
their squeaking startle evidences a patterning world.
The platypus, solid ramrod of beak and fur,
the corn rattle, thanksgiving for deep harvest,
Mother Duck and family, a waddling saga through infant time,
red Reynard, duckling bright eyes and tickling tail;
all adult chosen to illuminate reality,
to create pleasant fantasies.

But now,
you lie in your peace
of water coolness, rocking pram, roll on towel
and flight through air.
Your toys stand silent for the fairy wand of age.

P. W. JEFFERY
Mary Durack

The Priest Who Rode Away

The following is part of a project resulting from long association with the people of the Dampierland Peninsula, about which area many colourful stories have been written. These accounts, mostly based on the memories of the old pearlers, were rich “alluvial” for earlier writing prospectors. To sink shafts into the complex histories and characters of the Aboriginal and mixed coloured people—side issues of the hazardous industry that dominated their world—has been a slower process, possibly only by becoming to some extent a part of the community, not conspicuously or always consciously “gathering material”.

Access, by courtesy of the Right Reverend Dr. J. Jobst, Vicar Apostolic of Kimberley, to the only source of consistently kept local records, in files of the Broome Parish, Beagle Bay and Lombadina missions and also, by the helpful kindness of Diocesan Archivist Father Senan Moynihan, to the archives of the Archdiocese of Perth, has enabled me to relate written and spoken evidence and to unearth in the process many almost forgotten names and aspects of history. Among these was an elusive character remembered by the natives as “poor Father Mac-a-nab”, who, when tracked down at last, well justified his place among the tribal legends of this fantastic peninsula of pearls.

Spare, dour and thinly thatched, skin burned and calloused by the sun, eyes—inflamed from “sandy blight”—behind steel rimmed spectacles, Duncan McNab was not, from all accounts, an impressive figure. He talked plain common sense with the rich burr of the Highland Scot but seldom seemed to win an argument or sway the unconvinced to his cause. His had been “a late vocation” to the Australian missionary field and in 1870, when Parish priest in Portland, Victoria, he had written asking to be received into the Benedictine community at New Norcia. Perhaps he was considered already too old, at fifty-one, to embark on the monastic life as seven years later he is located at an Aboriginal reserve on Bribie Island in Moreton Bay. He rates a mention in “Tom Petrie’s Reminiscences of Early Queensland” where, in consequence of an altercation with black “Prince Willie” for smoking a pipe at prayers, he is said to have abandoned the islanders to their unregenerate ways. The story indicates a lack of realism and faintness of heart that other reports and his own writings belie.

When his proposals for grants of land and a programme of practical training for the natives were turned down “in toto” by his fellow Commissioners, he had resigned from the moribund Queensland Aboriginal Protection Board and returned to work on the reserves. Bedevilled by fever, sore eyes and lack of support he made little progress and when sun-stroke convinced him at last that he must seek help elsewhere he set sail for America. Among many pious regrets he received at least two half promises from religious orders to espouse his cause, but returned alone at last to continue his fruitless fight against the apathy of both black and white.

Father Matthew Gibney, waging a similar battle on the other side of the continent, saw in the dogged Scottish priest just the sort of dedicated Apostle he was seeking to prepare the way for missionary
work in the north west. While in Roe-
bourne in '78 Father Gibney had been
outraged to see native prisoners chained
together by neck and ankle with irons that
blistered their flesh, heard how absconders
had been found dead in their chains in
the dry beds of creeks. He had seen dark
bodies marked with the welts and scars
of the lash; witnessed the persecution of
the proud and strong, the body and soul sub-
jection of the co-operative and the weak.
He saw the despised half caste children
of the lordly white and humbler Asiatic,
the growing degradation and disease of
the natives around the townships and the
pearling camps, and worst of all the vice
and squalor of the pearling boats where
native “skin divers”, often “blackbirded”
into the industry, were held in “Calcutta
black-holes” to prevent their swimming
ashore at night.

Haunted by the lament of the stricken
and bereaved he launched his long and
impassioned campaign for the rights of
the dark people, though the full force of
his public voice was not to be heard until
he succeeded the ageing Bishop Griver
some years later. At this stage he still
had some faith in a reasoned approach
and a return to the more responsible atti-
tude of earlier Western Australian settle-
ment.

Since 1841 a succession of Government
and Church welfare schemes for the Abo-
rigines had petered out until, except for
the Catholic mission at New Norcia, there
remained only two small Anglican institu-
tions catering for a handful of half caste
waifs at the Swan and the Vasse. A doubt
had grown up meantime in the western
colony that this baffling race could ever
be integrated with a forward thinking
society. Only the Benedictine establish-
ment with its devoted community of agri-
cultural monks showed consistent promise,
and in campaigning for a missionary foun-
dation in the north in '79 Father Gibney
had cast “a wistful glance” in this direction
through the medium of the Catholic
Record. In the prime of his vigorous
optimism he had idealised New Norcia as
a flourishing Christian community, firm in
faith and growing in the will to succeed,
children with scrubbed and shining faces,
diligent in the pursuit of learning and
destined for a leading part in the future
of their country. On the other hand
Abbot Salvado, for all his mission was only
then entering its period of greatest pros-
perity, knew well enough that his “beloved
children of the forest” were possessed of a
strange and elusive spirit that still threat-
ened his defeat. Father Gibney with his
belief in the basic stability of native char-
acter and the prospects for successful
apostolic and agricultural work in the arid
north may well have seemed to the
pioneer monk something of a parvenu in
the missionary field. At all events, he
declined the hint and it was twenty years
and another Abbot later before the Span-
ish Benedictines took up their task among
the wild, unwelcoming tribes of north-west
Kimberley.

Father McNab, however, then in his
65th year, promptly accepted an invitation to the west. On arrival early in 1883, in order to learn something of the local tribes, he took up the post of chaplain at Rottnest Island, then an Aboriginal penal reserve, and wrote long reports pointing out the futility of punishing people for reasons that in most cases they did not understand. He found that the 180 inmates responded well to his simple instruction in the white man's law but urged that they should, at this stage, be tried in the light of their tribal teachings (a reform measure to be put through some 25 years later), and that Christianity should be taught with emphasis on the best aspects of their own beliefs. They should be encouraged, he believed, through training in agriculture, various trades and the management of their affairs to settle in stable occupations or on land of their own, but he stressed, from his experience on the Queensland reserves, that little could be done with those who had abandoned their tribal code for the worst practises of white society. In fact, his proposals reiterated the intentions of Governor Hutt when, over 40 years before, he had established the dreaded island settlement as a humane alternative to the close confinement and chaining of prisoners.

Father McNab's reports were placed before the Aboriginal commission of '83 and as a result two men were sent to instruct the prisoners in carpentry. The effort was half-hearted and short lived, its failure adding further weight to the commissioners' summing up that "the experience of fifty years finds us at a point as if we had never begun . . . ."

Father Gibney had tried meanwhile to convince Government officials of their responsibility towards native education in the north-west, remarking that since "thousands of pounds are being annually expended not for their protection but rather their detention and punishment, it cannot be considered inappropriate to ask help for them." Apparently, however, it was so considered, at least for the purpose of subsidising a Catholic mission in the north, and only the conscience of a few and a lucky dip into some church fund provided enough for a modest start.

Since ill health had prevented one Father Martelli from accompanying him, Father McNab set forth alone about the middle of '83, and landed with his horses at Geraldton to carry out a journey of inspection that might well have daunted many younger and stronger men. Between the Murchison and De Grey Rivers, seven hundred miles as the crow flies, the priest must have covered, in his rambling route, well over a thousand miles north and as many back again, measuring and assessing native reserves, searching out reported encampments (mostly mythical), examining river frontages, springs, pools, ranges and areas likely for cultivation. With surprisingly bushmanlike perception he reported little prospect for a mission on the existing reserves that were "clearly intended only for a name". All areas embracing river frontages had been taken up by squatters or speculators and he thought the best chance lay in bidding for a forfeited run of twenty to fifty thousand acres on a good water course between the Ashburton and the De Grey. But let no one think the task would be simple, he warned. The work would meet with opposition and possibly some sabotage from both pastoralists and pearlers while the natives themselves would be by no means easy to convince that one white man held their interests much above another. It was all very well to talk vaguely of "big encampments of bush natives", and of "hundreds of others" eager for some alternative to employment in the existing industries. Reduced to tin-tacks the situation was this: Almost all local natives not attached to the stations were either serving sentences on Rottnest Island or seeking refuge from the police in inaccessible mountainous areas. The only natives he had found camped in the bush had proved
to be station blacks on “walkabout”. None of these had complained to him of their lot, nor were all pastoral employers indifferent to their welfare. The 600 natives employed by the pearling fleets around Cossack had been recruited or “shang-haiied” from tribes between Campion Bay and the Kimberley coast and were unlikely to settle down on a mission so far from home.

No doubt the odds appeared too great even for the sanguine Father Gibney and early in April ’84 Father McNab sailed from Cossack to Derby in the S.S. Otway. On arrival his horses, still lame from hard travelling and in poor shape after a rough voyage, ploughed through heavy tidal mud to the hot, ugly little settlement that had sprung up as an outlet for the newly opened pastoral district of West Kimberley. A frontier trading post in the comfortable and makeshift Australian style, its only inhabitants were a few business people, determined to get out as soon as possible, a contingent of police and an ever-changing but identical-seeming chain gang of Aboriginal prisoners. The priest was received with some kindliness and given the use of a cottage though none offered him much encouragement for his mission. As all likely country inland from Derby had been taken up he proceeded to the Dampierland peninsula with a police patrol investigating rumours of trouble.

A bizarre collection of ships from stately “mother schooners” and cutters to broken down luggers and flat bottomed tubs by this time ranged the coast from Shark Bay to Darwin with ever increasing activity around the North-West Cape and the Lacepede Islands. Roebuck Bay, where the port of Broome was soon to be proclaimed, had already become popular as a depot or “lay up” base while crews operating from Cygnet Bay had begun braving the 8 knot tidal rips and “heavy water” of King Sound—“the Graveyard” of many ships and of the dark skinned men and women whose lives were cheap.

Father McNab had some sympathy with the police in their efforts to distil a semblance of the truth from the confused babble of charges and countercharges that confronted them. Bodies were exhumed from sandy graves in an effort to establish foul play. Malays and Chinese supported European pearlers in allegations against the Aborigines. Japanese gave evidence against Koepangers and Filipenas against Solonese and West Indians. Aborigines made statements of classic ambiguity. It was almost impossible, at that stage, to establish the time and manner of death from the remains unearthed, but though some were admitted to have been killed in drunken brawls over native women, most were said to have been speared by blacks either for motives of theft or from sheer capriciousness. The pearlers, with the support of their nervous Asiatic divers, alleged that the natives were hatching a plot to massacre all the crews on the peninsula and strongly urged a “punitive expedition” to teach them a stern lesson. The blacks denied any such intention but admitted to a few reprisal murders and complained bitterly of the use made of their women and of the holding of their young people on the Lacepedes to sell to pearlers down the coast.

The police, having made a few token arrests, gave warning of the general tightening up of regulations concerning the employment of Aborigines on the luggers and announced that the use of native women was now forbidden for any purpose other than as station domestics. Although it was clearly impossible for a small force stationed at Derby to police the widespread activities of the pearling fleets or to prevent the exploitation of the only women available in a wild land, some of the pearlers prudently signified their intention of applying for pastoral rights on the peninsula. Two or three had in fact already run up timber shacks, sunk wells and with a few head of inferior stock
dignified their lay-up bases with the names of cattle "stations".

Father McNab found to his disappointment that most of the sheltered bays and inlets were occupied and although no legal rights had yet been established he knew that he could get nowhere in competition for the natives with these tough pearlers and their motley crews. Still, the fact that many of the tribespeople seemed anxious to resist the corruption of the layup camps gave him hope and further indicated the need for a place of refuge. By this time the police, if not particularly optimistic for his prospects, had gained enough confidence in the priest to agree that something should be tried and that instruction of the natives in the white man's law might ease the heavy burden of the Kimberley force. They had far too many native prisoners to hold and organise, while punitive expeditions that seemed an obvious enough solution in the north were inclined to be misunderstood elsewhere, often resulting in long, embarrassing enquiries.

Goodenough Bay, just south of Point Cunningham on the King Sound side, unpopular as a pearling base both geographically and because of the reputed treachery of the local Nimbanbor tribe, seemed a possible site. As fictitiously picturesque as a setting from Treasure Island, its white beach, criss-crossed with turtle tracks and littered with the remains of native feasts, led into a tropical confusion of pandanus palms, shady cadjiputs and whitegums around fresh water springs. A few natives, surprised in their camp, greeted them with scowls and muttered unpleasants. On learning that the white men were not pearlers, however, their attitude relaxed and they appeared to approve Father McNab's suggestion that he build a little house and live there as their friend and protector. Whether they were merely humouring an apparently harmless eccentric or, with the sometimes uncanny perception of the Abor-...
existence of this lonely white man as "so much more irksome, laborious and difficult than their own that they will hardly be inclined to follow his example or hark to his teaching." He expected nothing of them before he could offer some material benefit and although they would sometimes present him with a fish, a piece of dhugong or turtle meat he suspected they were quite capable of killing him if he attempted to lock up his stores. Sometimes they thieved from his scant supply but never, he recorded gratefully "when I have least and always leaving me some when they could as easily have taken the whole". He had no weapon, not even a shotgun, and although he did not delude himself that the people respected him much for this he believed defencelessness to be his best means of protection. He soon gathered that the peninsula tribes were not impartial to the taste of human flesh, that the old men were not always as reluctant to trade their women and young men to the pearlers as they made out and that the murders they committed were not always provoked or justified in tribal law. Typical of all his letters was his scrupulous regard for the unvarnished truth even when it might have profited him better to evade or elaborate. Pressed by Father Gibney for some estimate of the numbers of natives on the peninsula he refused almost irritably to commit himself even to a guess. ("I only tell the truth but cannot tell that till I know.")

In June '85 he wrote of the spearing of Captain Richardson and his mate on the beach at Cygnet Bay, just north of Cunningham Point. The motive was said to have been to loot the lugger but the Chinese cook, with a spear through his leg, had quickly up-anchored and sailed to report to the police in Derby. About the same time a pearler named Kelly was murdered off Cape Londonderry by his native crew who, making off with the loot in a dinghy down 400 miles of notoriously treacherous coast, performed an incredible feat of endurance and seamanship only to collide with the police party at Cygnet Bay.

The force, under fire from outside for brutal tactics against the defenceless natives, taunted in the district for failure to protect a handful of struggling pioneers against the savage hordes, had in this case decided to placate the critics close at hand. A wounded native lad staggered into Father McNab's camp with a story that they had rounded up all the tribespeople around Cygnet Bay and Swan Point, near Cape Levique, pushed aside the women and children and shot down all the adult males. As Father McNab tended his wound, the boy told how he had shammed dead and snaked into the scrub while the police were preparing a mass grave. The priest rode at once to the scene, but the police had evidently returned to Derby and all the bush natives, including those in his own area, had gone into smoke.

The silence, broken only by the screaming of the sea birds and the wash of the tides, pressed heavily on his spirits. He knew that as yet no-one of any colour in this crude and Godless land really understood or wanted his mission. It seemed that even his friends had lost faith in his work, though for himself he still believed that, given support and some protective authority, he might yet direct these lost and lovable children to splendid things. He had visions of a fishing industry, the boats built and manned by Aborigines, of native villages, farms, market gardens and a growing tradition of local handicrafts—all the dreams of all the missionaries who ever hoped to bring the trace elements of Christian stability to this drifting soil!

Towards the end of '85 the lugger that was to have brought his stores and mail from Derby was wrecked in a "cockeye" that destroyed much of the pearling fleet of the coast. His overland route blocked by flooded rivers, he was stranded with only what he could scrounge from the pindan scrub and the sea. Tortured by
intermittent fever and the infected bites of sandflies and mosquitoes, his old eye trouble returned and he could scarcely see the sun by day or the glow of his lantern by night. Still completely alone, he had invoked the aid of St. Michael, “one of my special protectors, I believe at any rate”, and help had come in the form of the tall young stripping from whom he had removed the policeman’s bullet. The boy, who had acquired the name of “Knife” while working on a pearl-lugger, proved sharp enough, when the flood subsided, to guide the sick man and his horses to Derby. The mail awaiting him must have contained something in the nature of a reprimand for his long silence for he wrote saying that few in the south could picture a northern “wet season”. He described how the Fitzroy swept in a majestic 14-mile wide channel to the sea, while crocodiles and quicksand endangered men and horses even when the force of the flood was spent.

It was then that he voiced his disillusionment for the first time. “For ten years,” he told Father Gibney, “I have hoped for associates in a mission to the Australian Aborigines, relying on the promises of Priests and Bishops and have been disappointed. However, if I cannot continue to hope I will work all I can for some time to come if God grants me the strength. I can manage a boat and do many kinds of work and have experience with the natives but now no more strength than a boy of 14 or 15. . . . If an assistant could be found or there was any prospect of an order or society coming I would continue till they came . . . for to abandon the mission would have a very bad effect. It would discourage further missionary work in the north and dispose the Government to assist it while leaving the natives in their present miserable condition. . . .”

This letter seems to have stirred up some activity in the south for in April 1886 Father William Treacy arrived at Goodenough Bay with a small boat, a quantity of stores, a spring cart and some building and farming equipment. The two priests, with erratic help from young Knife and a few other natives, quickly erected a small church and house of timber and spinifex thatch, fenced and ploughed a garden plot and sowed seed. As it was now possible to offer some inducement, the natives began to camp around the mission and would sometimes gather at the doorway of the little church during Mass or Benediction. Hitherto they had found the white race curiously lacking in a ritual life that was so essential to their own existence and the religious aspect made more sense to them than the missionaries’ practical activities. They showed some enthusiasm for learning hymns and listened to the Christian message with every appearance of respectful interest, though they were loathe to admit that the white teachings had anything new to offer them. No doubt they had in mind the legend (later to be recorded by the missionary anthropologist Father E. A. Worms) of the teacher Galalang who had preached a good and simple life that proved too difficult for mere men and so had been destroyed. A dark shade in the milky way, he would never return to earth they said, and his story was remembered only as proof of man’s affiliation with the cult heroes of magic and sorcery.

Still, when Father McNab left on a business trip to Derby some four months later, he felt they had made a promising start. At this stage, however, his path was diverted by news from Hall’s Creek, some 300 miles east, where prospectors were said to be dying in hundreds by the roadside or in their lonely camps. Moved by a heart-rending story of men calling in vain for a priest or asking for letters to be written to their relatives, he felt it his immediate duty to ride to the diggings and give what help he could.

He returned to Derby some time later.
to be met with the news that Father Treacy, in a delirium of fever, had been brought in by lugger and sent back to Perth. Father McNab made haste to the mission only to find his buildings burned to the ground, his equipment destroyed, his garden returning to the scrub. Some declared that when Father Treacy left the local Nimambo ransacked the store and set alight to it. Some held a bushfire responsible while others insisted that “lugger blacks” had done the damage at the instigation of their boss who did not hold with missionaries.

Lacking further written evidence we have only the word of the older natives of the peninsula for the rest of the story, but on this part at least they are agreed. The boy Knife is said to have heard Father McNab calling out and found him lying, weak and ill, among the ruins of his mission. Fearing he was about to die the natives returned and made anxious efforts to help and comfort him, even offering to build the mission up again. They cooked him fish and, as his packs were almost empty, managed to beg, borrow or steal some provisions for him from a pearl­ing camp. As soon as he was strong enough he mustered up his horses and, despite the wailing protests of the people, rode away. They watched him disappear into the scrub—“poor old Father Maca­Nab”, in his worn khaki suit, battered straw hat and broken glasses, a pitiable failure of a man in retreat from his dream. Young Knife followed him to his first camp. By daylight next morning he had a fire lit and the horses ready, and from there on he rode bareback until a saddle was got for him from the nearest station.

The story that the priest and the native lad rode 1,400 miles to Perth and thence another 300 to Albany seems far-fetched. I cannot vouch for it, but old people of the Bard tribe at Lombadina mission heard it so often from Knife before his death some years ago that they can still draw a ground map of the route he described to them. Nobody could explain why the priest had not sold his horses and taken a ship, for Knife had asked no questions. He had simply gone along because his “heart was sore” for the brave old priest who had tried to help his people. After Father McNab sailed from Albany, Knife, they said, had ridden back to his tribe on the Dampierland coast.

Father McNab never had the satisfaction of Christening his faithful companion in the name of his patron saint Michael as he had hoped. Except for a few natives Baptised on the point of death, he claimed no Christians in Kimberley and probably thought his work completely fruitless. He was not to know that his memory would be cherished by all the tribes of that wild peninsula, and that when Bishop Gibney arrived with two Trappist monks in 1890 the police could assure them that there had been little trouble with the natives since his sojourn there. Timid at first of the strangers in their hooded robes the people, on learning that they were “brothers belong Father Mac-a-Nab”, had brought gifts of food, led them to the ruins of the abandoned mission and thence, across the peninsula, to the fertile springs of Beagle Bay.

NOTE.—The writer would be grateful for any further information about Father McNab, for except that he sent a nautical map of the peninsula to Beagle Bay mission in 1894, nothing more of him has as yet come to light.
SERGEANT Flanders looked across the room to where Constable McDonald sat writing at his desk. Good young fellow, McDonald, he mused, good sound man. Then the 'phone rang.

"I'll take it," he said, and reached for the receiver. "Yes, Sergeant Flanders speaking. Oh, it's you Fred. Yes. What's that? Eh? A 'plane? Now look, Fred... Oh. You did, eh? Yes, Yes, go on. H'm... Yes... The road to Pleiades Flat. Well, if you can call it a road... Yes, a black hill, I know it, only hill for miles... And about half a mile due South y' say? Righto, I'll pick you up at Piper's Rock as fast as I can get there. Yes. Goodbye."

"Sounds important, Sergeant."

"It is. Fred Evans, that old prospector out past Piper's Rock, he says he saw a light 'plane crash in the scrub close to the old track to Pleiades Flat. Went to it, saw it was all smashed, and a bloke's tracks leading away. Got all that? Half a mile south of the only hill anywhere near that track. Got that? Right! You tell Kalgoorlie, and I'll go out with Toby and the Land Rover, pick up Fred at Piper's Rock, and go on to the crash, then it's Toby's job to track him."

"Now, don't you think it'd be better..."

"No, I don't! You tell Kalgoorlie and stay here. This is my picnic. You've got years of drunks and dog licences before you can claim the interesting jobs. Toby! Hey there, Toby, Come on, there's a job of tracking for you to do."

THE scrub was thick enough to hold a man back if he tried to keep to a straight course and open enough if he made minor detours.

"Just keep plugging along, birdie-boy, and you'll be all right. Pity of course. Second time in six months. First, that one at Meekatharra. Now this one. Lucky, no doubt about it. Walkaway Randell, eh? You'll get yourself a nickname if you do this often enough. Hell, it's hot! And of all the luck, here's a bit of an old track! Ah, me boy, you weren't born to drown or hang, or to get killed in a crash, that's certain. And you crows, you... know... what... you can do don't you? I'm not for you, no, not this time! And a small round pebble under the tongue, that's a good thing when a man's thirsty, now... Ah, I'll get to that bend in the track and I'll take a spell. Just a minute or two.

And another track! One North, one Northwest. H'm. Oh well, keep to the north one. But wait on now, wait on! Listen, listen! Hey there! Hey!"

"This way, this way! Come on with you now, the straight road, come on!"

"We're a' waiting for ye, laddie, come away' wi us."

"Come on, mate, this is the short cut. It'll take miles off the trip."

"You're lucky you came up with us; we reckoned we were the last out from the Flat."

"Hold on, I'll be with you in a minute. Whew! Be the Lord, I'm glad to see you chaps. It's a scorcher, isn't it? How far to the main road? And where are... but of course, you're going that way too."

"There's some on the other track, the long way round, with wather ivery ten mile or so, but we'll take the short cut and we'll be in the Ould Camp days before 'em all."

"Horsemen, some of 'em, and I'll lay a
bright sovereign I'll beat even them to Coolgardi. Here, look at this! Half an hour's work and eighty ounces of nuggets! Eighty ounces if it's a pennyweight o' the lovely stuff. And I'll register me claim with the Warden and when the rains come why, it'll be back to Pleiades Flat and a fortune for this young Sandgroper!"

"Register the claim and wait for rain, and go back then and take out a fortune. Ah, it's been a bitter long lead, fra' Storm-away to the rainbow's end at Pleiades Flat, an' there's been a falter at the heart, whiles. But give me a twelvemonth, an' I'll see the proud ship cut the water, and the isles of home coming up out of the sea."

'From the lone shieling of the misty island,
Mountains divide us, and a waste of seas,
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.'
'Tis only a proper Scot could have said it so!"

"There's a place, now, in Connemara, a poor place, you'd say, with a dwelling none too grand, and the fields, ah, you'd say the fields were but bogland under weeping skies. And yet me heart's set there, an' I'll go with gold in me hand, and have title to the place, an' live out me days there, me, and me own love."

"I got a lotter things I wanta do, but just let me get a couple munc e work in on my claim, come the rains, an' I'll do the whole bang lot of 'em. An' when my ole man sees me come back, cigar in me moosh, an' me sittin' up like John Forrest 'imself in a high-wheel King o' the Road buggy and four bays steppin' lively, and a fair-haired dolly in a picture hat next to me, feather boa an' button boots, pearl buttons mind yer, an' the raggedy kids scrambling for the shillings I pelt down at 'em, why, maybe he'll change his mind about me! 'Useless lout' he called me, and kicked me out. Me, that worked for him every hour o' daylight Gawd ever sent, on the farm at Pinjarra! Well, he'll change his tune when he sees me next, the rotten ole swab."

"Lunnon again? Ho no, not me! There's a plice fer me in Melbun, a very nice plice for yours truly. A neat little hotel, an' a trim little Lunnon widder woman as is 'ousekeeper there, and it's 'er and me as'll have the licence of it, after I've made enough from Pleiades Flat. An' she'll wear this nugget for a brooch, an' oo d' y' fink'Il 'ave a rose in his button-hole as big as a bloomin' cabbabbage? Little Billy 'Opkins, none other! An' I'll walk down Bourk e Street, Saturdee night, sedate like, with 'er on me arm, and maybe I'll point out the butcher's shop w'ere I worked when I first come out from the Old Dart. An' oo knows, I might just BUY that shop, for ole times' sake. Ho, it's a bold life and a free, the goldfields life, for us lucky ones."

"Let's keep moving. It's a long lead to the Old Camp, an' all rough going. An' if you want to know what I'm goin' to do, when I've made me pile from Pleiades Flat, well, I'll tell you. I'll go further out, looking for more. The Palmer, in 1873, that was the start of it for me, and it's been a lust in my blood ever since. Palmer, and the Coen, Nebo, Croyden, and dozens more in Queensland, I was on 'em all, and then it was the Kimberley Rush, in '86. Hall's Creek and Mt. Dockereel, and a score of nameless gullies, and south then to Nullagine, and all across the Pilbarra, and down to the Ashburton Top Camp, and on to Nannine. The Mainland, Cue, Day Dawn, Mt. Magnet, Youanme, Lake Way, Darlot, Leonora, ah, it's a long list o' camps, an' the fever still burns in a man. Bayley's Find, Hannan's Find, Kurnalpi and Kanowna, and always short of water, and living like a dog, and if a man got gold, he put it into searchin' for more elsewhere. Always the country further on, further out, luring us forward. Hard times and high hopes, and, . . . well,
now a man’s caught in the web of it, a
slave to it, and he hugs his chains. Wife
and children, and the warmth of home;
friendship and the quiet life, snug se-
curity, a peaceful old age, they’re nothing,
not the weight of a feather in the balance,
against the finding of gold. And after
Pleiades Flat I’ll get camels again and go
out with Frank Samson, my old mate,
away out North and East of Lake Darlot.
Camels, that’s what we’ll have, Frank and
I, and good gear, the best, and we’ll break
new ground. But now it’s a case of keep
moving. Ah, many’s the long lead, by
scrub or saltlake, sand plain, or the gullies
east of Nullagine, that we’ve tramped, and
many’s the dry lead ahead of us, in the
years to come.”

“Not for me, mate! It’s me for the
bright lights, and the bright eyes, and
champagne for breakfast, once I’m on
top!”

“No, nor me neither, camels nor no
camels. Strike me pink, ain’t a man
gettin’ it ’ard enough, vivout wastin’ it
lookin’ for more? I says to meself, in
Coolgardie, I says, when I took the
typhoid, and near enough croaked viv it,
I sez to myself, ‘Willy ’Opkins, me ole
cocksparrer, if ever you gets outa this
stinking ’ole,’ I says, ‘an’ gets gold, good
gold, then get to hell outa the blasted
Colony and never come back,’ I says. It’s
Melbun for me, I says then, and I says it
now.”

“The soft skies, and the grey rain fallin’;
ah, it’s great to know a man’s on gold, and
only a six month more of flies, and heat,
and privation afore he sails for ould Erin
again. Ah, it’s been worth it, worth every
longdrawnout month and year of it, to be
so sure of bein’ me own man, in me own
place, with me own love, in Connemarra.

“No one of us but has his dream, and
each dream a secret, of the heart, and the
mind, and the blood. The turf fire on
the open hearth, and the night closed in, an’
the soft speech in the old tongue, and all
that’s past, forgiven. To each his own
dream. What’s driven us? Oh, make no
doubt of it, we’re driven! By gold, ye’d
say? But why do we lust for gold? To
make our dreams true? And our dreams.
will gold fashion them true for us? Can
gold make the isles of home fairer to my
eyes? I’ll no think too deep; I’ll see it
maybe clearer where the waves roll in
from the Western Ocean, an’ the seabirds
cry their thin crying.”

SERGEANT Flanders and Fred Evans
moved forward, following Toby, as
Toby followed Randall’s tracks. Toby
moved fast, with supreme confidence, and
the two white men followed confidently,
until at last the blackman faltered.

“Well Toby, what the hell’s wrong now?
You lost the track?”

“Nothingbah, Chargen. Can’t lose ’im.”

“Well, what’sa matter?”

“Nother men, Chargen, little bit mob!
Nothing track, Chargen, aw, I don’t like
this business, mightbe Djoona, mightbe
Yahkanoo, nothing man! Eh, I don’ like!”

“Now cut it out Toby! Get on with
it an’ cut out all this devil-devil stuff. Here
Fred, give me a pull at that waterbag, and
you just get moving, Toby, or else . . . !”

“Look Sarge! There, just at the bend!
That’s him! Come on, quick!”

BACK at the police station Constable
McDonald looked across the desk at
Sergeant Flanders and Fred Evans.

“And you reckon Toby wanted to turn
it in, eh, right at the last minute?”

“Ah, blackfellas! If there’s nothing
wrong they’ll dream something up.”

“You know Sarge, all this reminds me
of something I heard years ago from a
bloke was mates with my old father, ole
bloke called Frank Samson. They were
mates on a bit of a show at Kookynie and
Frank useter talk about the rush to Plei-
ades Flat. Frank was there, right from
the start almost. Good ground, terrible
rich, but no water. Seems they were all
doing wonderful well while the bit of sur-
face water lasted, then, when that cut out,
after a few weeks, everyone had to head
off back to Coolgardie to wait for the rains. Well, anyway, everything went all right, except for five coves that tried to be a bit too clever an' took a shortcut through the scrub. Perished, poor devils; they never found 'em for months after. Ole Frank Samson knew all of 'em, reckoned they were helluva good fellers, but well, there y' are, they perished. Just there where that ole track turned off from the Pleiades track was where they started off on their last short cut. Ah well, if there's nothin' else, I'd better get moving.

"There's only the paper work to be done Fred. Thank God we don't have to bring in a dead man every day."

"AND our dreams are the reality. There is nothing for any of us, without the dream. We'll get gold, a fortune of gold, some of us. And what matter if there's no gold, no grand fortune, if the dream be golden?"

"I'll show 'im! Four highsteppin' bays, and black and yeller spokes, and a hamper in the luggage boot, with champagne and roast chicken! Rotten ole sod! I'll show 'im!"

"She's fair as the morning, and no higher on tippytoe than me shouldar, an' she waits for me, in ould Connemarra."

"'Ho, good afternoon, Mr. 'Opkins, sir,' they'll say, an' I'll doff the tile. 'A fine afternoon to you too, me friend," I'll say, an' she'll smile, ladylike, 'longside me. 'Yus,' they'll say, 'he made his fortune in the West, an' retired to the best little public 'ouse in Melbun. Half his luck,' they'll say. 'Mr. William 'Opkins, no less, mine 'ost of the 'Crimson Dragon'."

"I'll get camels, and off out with Frank Samson, right out. There's gold further out. Always further out."

"To each of us, a dream."

"You'll get yourself a nickname! 'Walkaway Randell,' they'll call you. Yes, by God, not one of 'em will ever see you as 'Mrs. Randell's little boy' again. Not one of 'em! And not June, either. No, not June. She'll be proud of you. 'Walkaway Randell', that's what they'll call you, 'Walkaway Randell'."

\[HIGH\] in the air a handful of crows, windblown. Below them, the black hill and the scrub, and the old Pleiades Track, and the waterless shortcut, and six men, now, eternally walking.

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**Much Nonsense**

He put bright bubbles into life, a foamy white detergent, with him sharp witchery was rife as ill's deterrent.

He skipped upon the hillocks of desire varying, though recurrent and danced as on a puppet wire like electric current.

He banished pain with a resurgent giggle, twisting his neck with glee and before old age could serve a warrant with mirth paid the fee.

OLIVE PELL
"BUT Beth, why does Mrs. Gaunt want me? Who is Mrs. Gaunt, anyhow?"

"You remember Rodney’s two aunts, Kee. They live next door to one another. They’re both Mrs. Gaunts. Aunt Elspeth has evenings. She likes to get important people there. And your name has been in the paper so often . . ."

“Oh yes,” he said. “I remember now. The fat one. I think I met her only once, though.”

“Well, she rang me and said, ‘Do bring that brilliant brother of yours on Thursday, dear. Dr. Frances Boulden is coming, too. I’m sure he’ll love to meet her.’"

“Who’s she?” asked Kee.

“I’m not sure. She’s lecturing in something. You will come, won’t you? Aunt Elspeth will lionize you.”

“My God, will she?”

“She loves lionizing people. And I owe it to her to go. I haven’t been to one of her Thursday nights for ages.”

“Thursday nights?”

“Mrs. Gaunt’s Thursday nights are famous. Good music, good talk, good supper, and very intellectual company.”

“That’ll be a change, anyhow. Is Rodney going?”

“Rodney can’t bear that sort of thing.”

“All right, I’ll come. You’ll pick me up?”

“Yes, a little before eight, Kee.”

So Beth found herself once again at one of Aunt Elspeth’s Thursday nights, even if she had a guilty feeling that this was taking her away from Rodney’s world. She told Elspeth she wanted to slip in next door and see Aunt Laura for a few minutes.

"Will you introduce Kee?” she said, and left.

Elspeth pounced on him and the lionizing began.

“Kee Follington, you know. He has been abroad. He was brilliantly successful on the London stage. We’re lucky to have him back again.”

“You don’t know how lucky!” thought Kee, receiving their homage with a slightly sardonic smile. Garnet Black, the stone merchant, looked stonily at him. His wife simpered and said,

“Did you enjoy your trip home?”

“It was rather dull,” said Kee.

“But England is so wonderful!”

“Oh, you mean England? Oh yes, of course.”

Mrs. Garnet Black was third generation Australian, but she always referred to England as ‘home’. Kingston Forbes greeted him warmly as one who knew success and approved of it, even if their respective fields of achievement were different. As he passed on, Mrs. Kingston Forbes whispered to her husband,

“Isn’t he handsome! What a lovely speaking voice he has!”

There were the Kieley Joneses and Andy Clarke whose novel had just come out and was being hailed by newspaper critics as ‘refreshing in its frankness,’ and Emerald Tunk whose sweater contours fascinated Kee. There was Ronald Veal, another artist—“Very abstract, you know,” said Aunt Elspeth, “almost esoteric, you might say.”—and Mary Foote—“She sings divinely!” And then Elspeth brought him to Dr. Frances Boulden. He felt himself being
appraised by a pair of cold, grey eyes and greeted in a thin, precise voice which denied every emotion as she said,

"How do you do?"

"Dr. Boulden is from the Melbourne University," explained Elspeth. "She is here to lecture on Australian literature."

"Good God!" exclaimed Kee. "What Australian literature?"

Dr. Boulden smiled blandly, recognizing a man of some perception.

Beth missed the tedious introductions. When she entered the room the music had already started. Elspeth beckoned her to a vacant chair next to her own and, as she sat down, bent over and whispered,

"Tchaikovsky's Sixth, the 'Pathétique'. You know. Isn't it grand?"

But Beth wasn't listening to the music. She was thinking of Aunt Laura in the loneliness of her house now that Uncle Bert was three weeks gone from her. Laura had met her with a damp kiss and a brave smile. They had talked not of her loss but of the baby that was to be born and of Rodney, whom Laura had seen more often during Bert's illness than during the previous two years.

"Rodney is looking very well," she said. "And I suppose he is sure it will be a son this time?"

"He is hoping for one," said Beth, although as she spoke she could not recall that Rodney had made many recent references to this. Indeed, there was no time these days, it seemed, with Rodney coming home late to dinner or not at all, or entertaining visiting businessmen or making the occasional hurried flight to Melbourne or Sydney. Beth sat with her thoughts wrapped in a cocoon of music that presently entered into and possessed her, so that its sadness seemed to speak to her of Aunt Laura and her loss. If I were left alone, she was thinking, would I be so brave? Yet in a way, I am alone. She became entirely alone in the room with nobody there but her thoughts and her music. They were inseparable, so that when the final movement of the symphony died away with its plaintive pianissimo she found herself crying and did not know whether it was because of the sadness of her own thoughts or the sadness of the music. As she wiped her eyes she was aware of a voice cutting across the silence of the room. It was the voice of Kieley Jones. It was saying,

"You know, I often wonder where all this comes from. All this music. Is it drawn from a pool somewhere out of reach of our vision, of our touch, of our senses?"

"It is the human mind," said Elspeth with conviction. "It creates."

"But does it?" persisted Kieley Jones, "Or does genius draw from somewhere, from some pool of beauty denied to us ordinary beings?"

"You mean," said Ronald Veale, "that somewhere in outer space there is a reservoir of music that has only to be contacted?"

"The music of the spheres," said Elspeth. "Remember Dryden's wonderful lines: 'From harmony, from heavenly harmony, this universal frame began.'"

"I think," interposed Kee, "that Dryden was trying to show more that man's moods could be interpreted through music. The trumpet's loud clangors excites us to arms' and 'Sharp violins proclaim their jealous pangs', and so on."

The beauty of his diction made Mrs. Kingston Forbes feel as if she might swoon.

"But surely," said Elspeth, "he was trying to point out that the universal harmony reached its final expression in mankind? The diapason closing full on Man', you remember?"

"That's not quite what I meant," persisted Kieley Jones. "I meant that man draws his inspiration from somewhere outside of himself, some reservoir of music, as Mr. Veale has so well expressed it."

"Then," said Kee drily, "all we need is a pipeline to tap it!"

Andy Clarke dared to speak up.
"Your theory, Mr. Jones, would apply equally to the great masterpieces of writing?"

"Of course."

"Then it's nonsense." The young novelist spoke with the authority of brief experience. "Writing is just hard work. I know. I've sweated blood over it."

Kieley Jones was on the point of retorting that there was writing and writing, but decided it would be impolite.

"Couldn't we approach it from a different angle?" asked Kingston Forbes. "Couldn't it be that what is created by man doesn't come from a sort of pool as Kieley suggests, but goes to form one. All the time man is building something which becomes part of the music of the spheres—literature and art, of course, being bracketed with music."

"Yes, yes," said Elspeth, seeking a path through the maze. "It's all a matter of vibrations, I'm sure."

Dr. Boulden said with a frozen face, "Both hypotheses are very interesting, almost, one might say, novel, but after all they remain hypotheses. I found myself wondering the other day what would happen if atomic fission destroyed human life on this planet. Would Shakespeare, would Goethe, would Dante, would all the great works of literature and art and music be lost for all time?"

"It brings us back, doesn't it," put in Kingston Forbes, "to the old philosophical argument of whether or not everything exists only in the mind of the beholder."

"Goodness," thought Beth, "this is terrible!" She had not the courage to express any opinion of her own.

Words rolled around the room.

Kee said, "It is human creativeness that makes man different from the animal. But where it comes from is impossible to say . . . ."

"Nor does it matter," said Dr. Boulden. "What matters is our evaluation of it. We must have our standards, based on firm values. In Australia we have, I am afraid, few firm values. We are perhaps too young. We tend to make swans of our geese. We judge subjectively, more often just liking or disliking because of some absurd belief that what is Australian must be good."

"You are a critic, I understand, Dr. Boulden," said Kee.

She smiled a bleak acknowledgment.

"Then do you make use of these firm standards to evaluate Australian writing?"

"Of course!"

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "Does any of it measure up?"

"Not as much as some like to think. But some does."

"Kendall and Lawson," beamed Elspeth, glad to be able to find a point of contact.

Dr. Boulden blanched.

"Kendall," she said icily, "is a very minor poet and Lawson barely touches the fringes of technical skill."

The discussion was becoming fragmented. Kee went across the room to Dr. Boulden.

"Tell me," he said, squatting on the carpet beside her, "now who is there in this painfully raw country that survives the test of true critical evaluation?"

Dr. Boulden smiled. It was a bleak smile that found no response in her grey eyes. Yet it expressed approval that he should be so perceptive as to seek her opinion. Her voice, always quiet, dropped to the level of private conversation.

Beth found herself with Andy Clarke and Emerald Tunk.

"Congratulations on your novel, Andy," she said. "I haven't read it yet, but the reviews have been good, haven't they?"

"Office boys and hack journalists do all the literary criticism in Australia," he said with a shrug of his shoulders. "No one has revealed that he has the faintest idea of what I was trying to do in that book."

"Really! How unfortunate for you!" Beth turned to the girl. "Are you still painting furiously, Emerald?"
“Painting,” she said. “But not furiously, I hope. By the way, Mrs. Slater, I haven’t done your portrait yet. I would like to, you know.”

“But I’m going to have a baby,” cried Beth.

“Yes, I know. That’s why!”

“But everything is so hideous!”

“No, it isn’t. Your face, Mrs. Slater, your eyes have a glow in them that is different. I would like to do just your head—nothing else. It would be symbolic. It would be marvellous, I’m sure.”

Beth put her hand to her mouth. In that moment she felt trapped.

THREE days later Emerald Tunk rang to say that ever since Thursday she could think of nothing else but the urgency of painting Beth’s portrait. Could she come? Please, please, could she come? She sounded quite distracted. Beth said she could come, mainly because she felt sorry for the girl, because she feared that if she denied her something dreadful might happen. But even as she agreed there was no pleasure in her agreement. She put the phone down, thinking, ‘Hodney must not know about this. What will he say if he knows?’ The thought struck at her. This was deception. It was the first time she had ever deceived Hodney. Then she calmed herself by saying she had agreed merely to satisfy this foolish girl’s whim. At the same time she realized she had never seen anything painted by Emerald Tunk. Aunt Elspeth said she was highly regarded among Perth’s younger artists. But what did that mean? Beth was inclined to share Hodney’s distaste for modern art. It seldom resembled anything it was supposed to resemble. ‘Oh dear!’ she thought. ‘Now I’ve done it!’ She examined her face in the mirror. The eyes were still full of brown life and the skin texture was pure and clear. She was really feeling wonderfully well. This baby was not taking it out of her as Susan had done before she was born. But to sit for a portrait the way she was!

Emerald Tunk arrived wearing an olive green jumper with a dark fleck in the wool and a pair of yellow corduroy trousers. Her nipples pimpled the jumper and her lips were cherry red. She glanced round the lounge-room studying the light. She brought a chair and said to Beth,

“Please, Mrs. Slater, sit here. I think this is the right position.”

Beth sat down nervously. Emerald drew a curtain halfway across the window.

“That’s it,” she said. “That’s perfect! Now, you don’t have to sit still all the time. Just relax and forget I am painting you.”

For three successive afternoons Emerald Tunk painted. Susan kept coming into the room and wanting to paint too, so Emerald gave her a brush and some paint on a saucer and the child made large sweeps and curves on a piece of scrap paper. Emerald Tunk said she was gifted and her talent should be encouraged.

But Beth, looking at what was growing on the canvas, wondered whether she was qualified to make any such pronouncement. To her it looked awful! Each night she hid the unfinished work so that Hodney should not see it.

On the third night, Beth sat looking at the finished picture.

“Do I really look like that?” she said half aloud.

The face showed nothing of the smooth texture of her skin. The hair was black above a chalk-white forehead. But there was a brilliant luminosity in the eyes. They seemed to glow out of the mass of shadows. There was no likeness, as far as Beth could see, nor any attempt at one. Hodney came in while she was still gazing at it.

“Good God!” he exclaimed. “What is it?”

“It’s me,” said Beth, not knowing her own voice. “I had it done as a surprise for you.”

Hodney burst out laughing.
“Well, for heaven’s sake!” he said when he had recovered from his mirth. “Is that all you’ve got to do? Sit around and be painted? I wouldn’t mind if it was anything like you.” His voice grew serious. “No, Beth, no. That’s not the girl I married!” It was obvious he meant what he said, and that he meant it kindly.

“Yet it has a quality, don’t you think? We could hang it in the lounge, Rodney. Emerald has told me where I can get it tastefully framed. A grey wooden frame with charred patches and an inner mount of grey coarse linen or canvas. People would never know it’s meant to be me. But it would tone in with the walls and the curtains.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “Hang it where you damn well like. But a portrait’s supposed to be a . . . a portrait.” He frowned at it, then looked quickly at her. “What did she sting you for it?”

“I gave her twenty guineas,” said Beth quietly. “You what? Damn it all, Beth! That’s daylight robbery.”

“She wanted to give it to me. I had to insist on her taking payment.” “You’re crackers!” he shouted and stamped out of the house.

Beth heard the engine of the car start up. She did not move. Nor at that moment did she let flow the tears that were welling up behind her eyes. She sat looking mistily at the portrait. Out of a dark smudgy background the contours of the face came a little uncertainly. There were highlights that brought out the line of the neck and the strong bone structure of her chin. The lips were not firmly painted, yet she saw that they were not in any way untrue to the shape of her lips. The nostrils were delicately suggested, but out of the shadows on each side of the bridge of the nose the eyes glowed with an intensity and a purpose that Beth could not feel were part of her. Above the pale forehead the hair was black and lustreless.

“It is the way I see you, Mrs. Slater,” Emerald Tunk had said. “Your spirit comes to me out of your eyes.”

Beth had never thought of herself beyond what her superficial image in the mirror revealed. She had taken pride in her beauty, in the preservation of her skin, the care of her hands, her hair, and the form of her body. Rodney had fallen in love with her beauty. There was no beauty in this portrait.

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**Water**

I hear the water  
Breathe fire’s snore,  
Slow, the mutter,  
Fast, the roar:  

And fear the water,  
See its brink  
Burning, utter:  
But must drink.

**DAVID ROWBOTHAM**

WESTERLY 37
The mornings were cold until the wind that swept in from the south-east dropped about nine o'clock, when the sun began to hold warmth, though on the side of the bins where the trucks unloaded there was shelter, and the men stood watching the wheat flow into the hopper, or talking to one another in the sun as the shadow of the silo retreated across the ground. But towards the end of the week the wind lessened, the days becoming hotter, and high light cirrus clouds lifted thinly across the sky.

On Thursday the cloud thickened, lying in heavy ridges tinged with black, and the flies, undisturbed by the wind, clustered about the faces of the men as they worked, the air humid. In the evening, the last of the wheat carters waved to him as the truck started on the weighbridge, and called:

"Looks like you won't be receiving in the morning if this comes up."

Henry said: "Would you say it will?"

"Could do. It's in the right quarter. We don't want it now."

The bridge vibrated as the truck moved off, picking up speed through the gears, its owner intent on a few more rounds of the harvester before darkness or the threatened rain defeated him.

After tea, when he came out of the weighbridge shed from doing the books, Henry looked at the sky for a time, it seemed that the clouds had lessened, and he went into the hut expecting that by morning they would have cleared, the wind again gusty, rattling the louvres of the windows in sudden clamour. Rain, if it did come, would not inconvenience him while they were loading into the silo, as it would the farmers with grain in the pads.

In the night he woke suddenly, and after a moment he knew that it was because the wind had dropped. The air was still and warm and in the silence he listened as if the thin glass louvres must rattle sharply, or the door creak at its iron clasp.

His rug had fallen to the floor. He got up unwillingly, his feet finding his sandals. He took his glasses from the box beside the bed, and yawned. He pulled on his trousers and shirt and went outside. The clouds were moving in the upper sky, though there seemed no wind, they were broken so that the moon glinted in sudden light along the length of the silo. He walked over towards the high iron bays, undecided whether to close the single gap sheet in the roof, as he had thought to do when he woke. He had no desire to climb about the roof in the dark, handling the iron sheets, doing something he would have to undo first thing in the morning if the rain did not come. By the bins he stood for a time, watching the sky. The weather, he thought, with a mild irony, had again significance. However we deny it in our suburban streets, or mock it behind glass, it has here power to drag me from my bed to ponder it. Then he was aware that the wind was moving again, colder and more from its old quarter, so that he shivered suddenly, and he thought that the chance was good enough to risk the gap sheet now. He turned away, and he saw plainly something move in the shadow of the small boxlike siding.

For a moment he thought it was a roo,
but he knew that if there had been any left alive in the timber beyond the store they would be unlikely to come here.

Then he thought suddenly of wheat thieves, the idea risen from all the half forgotten trivia and melodrama, the irrational and the unlikely, that he knew could lie in a man’s mind to bide its time as if he were no more than a child. And he could have laughed, for there was no vehicle, and wheat was not stolen in the middle of the season.

He went slowly towards the siding, and the risen wind shifted one of the loose roof sheets slightly so that it scraped and was silent. Almost the shadow seemed clear now, and he blamed his eyes, or the sudden shift of cloud against the moon, glad that in fact there could be nothing, that he might deride the irrational.

The woman said: “I—I thought it was you.”

“Yes,” he said. It seemed she might reveal something shameful if he did not spare her, if he could not find words. “I—it seemed as if it was going to rain—I was worried about the gap sheet—”

“It did seem as if it would rain.”

She stood in the shadow. He could not see her face. She might have mocked him, he felt a slow defensive anger.

“I thought I saw someone,” he said. “So I came over. I’m sorry.”

She said suddenly: “If there had been any trains through here for the last four years I suppose I could say I had come over to meet one.”

He did not answer and she said:

“Or to collect some parcel.”

“It’s a long time since anything was left on this siding.” He heard his own words and he wondered why what had been meant to sustain a mood sounded flat and platitudinous, why speech should always seem to betray him, as if what he must say could never lie in the words themselves.

“It’s no good,” she said. “I came over here because there’s nowhere else.”

He was standing close to her, and he could see her face quite clearly in the uncertain light. Her expression held a hardness as if she derided herself for speaking to him.

“It’s no place—at this time—in the cold—”

“No. The store is locked. And the car. I could never go into one of those wheat bins at night. They terrify me. So there it is.”

She moved suddenly a few paces, as if she would leave him, and then she said:

“I’m sorry you saw me. I’d have been gone in the morning. And you’d not have been involved in a domestic quarrel. He locked me out, of course. It happens I’m afraid of the dark.”

Her voice was contemptuously matter of fact, but he felt now that the contempt was directed at the situation rather than at him, or perhaps even at herself. He said:

“I’m sorry. I don’t want to interfere—but perhaps if I could help—”

“I don’t think anyone can help, really.” Again her tone was matter of fact, almost impatient, devoid of pity for herself and perhaps any other who might come too close to this which involved her.

“I could light the stove in the hut,” he said. “That would at least be warm, and make a cup of tea, if you like.”

She smiled faintly, and he saw her dark brows lift momentarily.

“Do you think that would be—wise?”

“Well—perhaps not. If you look at it that way.”

“But a kind thought.”

“You don’t have to accept it. It was just a suggestion.”

She moved past him and abruptly towards the wooden bench along the inside of the shed. She thought that at least she need not oppose this stranger with the kind of sarcasm that had become habitual between herself and the man who had
caused her to be here. And she knew that it was as if she resisted his sympathy, tentative though it was, and probably easily enough deflected. She said:

"Don't let's fight. It's just—I'm at a disadvantage—you seeing me like this—"

"In the morning," he said, "it need not have been."

She nodded slowly. "Perhaps."

"I'm a stranger. Someone passing. No one will ever know."

"I don't know why it matters. One clings to a few tatters of reserve, I suppose."

"Yes." He hesitated. "I know how you feel. I'm not really a stranger to—well, what you called domestic quarrels."


"Now, perhaps."

"You are married? I'm not being inquisitive. It's just—is that what you mean?"

"Not now."

"I see. Now you have—freedom. You can travel around like this—uncommitted."

"You can call it that." He wondered if she were perhaps overstating to draw his response.

"It was something you wanted?"

"Well—I don't know."

She laughed. "People usually have strong convictions about this sort of thing." She liked suddenly his disinclination to simplify, his unwillingness to state in blacks and whites, as if she were reminded how far she seemed herself to have gone from this in her own relationship.

"I suppose," he said, "it would be easier to be certain if one were younger. For myself—you see, so much time has been left behind that I'm not used to what you call being free. Perhaps it came too late to be something I can use."

"Do you believe that?"

"I don't know. After a certain time freedom is so clearly relative, I suppose."

She said with mock severity: "You distrust too readily, perhaps."

"Let's say I never quite expected it, if you see what I mean." He grinned. "But I'm trying to find my feet."

"I think I do see what you mean." She laughed suddenly, and he felt her tension and antagonism were withdrawn. "It's a subject we seem to be pretty familiar with."

He said: "This has happened before?"

"Oh yes. The first time—I didn't really know what I was doing—I got into the car, just to be out of the cold, and then I drove out along the road for a while. I thought I'd never come back. And perhaps I shouldn't have. Of course, I did. But he locks it now."

Outside the shadows of the clouds passed across the ground, and they could see one end of the hut and the weighbridge shed, the station wagggon parked against it.

She said: "It's a nice car you have."

"Yes." He thought it was as if they were waiting for a train, strangers briefly in one another's company, and must find the conventionalities, their moment of discovery past, perhaps regretted. "I bought it when the house was sold."

She ran her hands along her bare forearms as if she were cold. He said:

"I don't know your name."

"Should you?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Jill. It doesn't sound very interesting."

"You're cold," he said. "Look, you can't stay here like this all night. I'll go and take a rug over to the bins and sleep in the wheat. It's very comfortable. You can use my bed."

"I couldn't turn you out like that."

"It's not turning me out. For what's left of the night I'll be quite comfortable in the wheat."

"It seems stupid—you having to go like that. I'm not so childish really. It's just that—well—if he did come—"

"I know." He was aware of the antagonism he had felt for Everett, and unwill-
ingly he knew that mingled with it there might lie fear. “We’re not such very old acquaintances, I suppose.”

She smiled. “Not really. And I am cold.”

“Come on,” he said.
“Don’t mind?”
“There’s no reason why I should.”
“Then—thank you.”

He took the rug from the hut and walked across to the bins. He could see no light from the store, though the dark scrub screened part of the building. He spread the rug upon the wheat that gave smoothly to his body and was comfortable. Above him the lighter square of the gap sheet showed the moving clouds, like some pattern of the shadows of the rafters and the high ridge poles. The crossbeams stretched gaunt and strange in the broken light. After a time he slept, aware of the cold and of the wind. As it began to grow light he went back to the hut, but she had gone. He looked at his bed, made up more neatly than he would have attempted, and it was all that suggested she had been there.

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Winter Walk

This pathway is a mile and bare
And yet gives back repose once more
As I walk at dusk. I quickly lose
A chill and flaccid day, and choose
Safe emblems in this garden late
With passion as the burning leaves abate.

Although compelled by routine light,
My life remains peripheral
While children play near ponds of night
And run to nothing, reach a wall
That blocks them like commands aversive
To violatirs in the dark.
And yet a child might soon disperse
The obstacles I dread beyond this park.

R. A. SIMPSON
The Left Hand

The rain stopped on the fourth day. By then the low parts of the grounds were squasy with mud and the lower pastures under water. The inmates who worked the dairy wore feed bags on their heads, the rain sliding down from the pinnacles of the bags and sluicing onto their military overcoats’ shoulders or continuing down their backs in shining trickles. Whenever one of them slipped over in the mud, the others did not laugh. No expression filtered into their heavy, raw faces. They simply stopped what they were doing and stared until the attendant yelled at them.

Up in the tower, which had the black water tank on top, the yelling from the solitary confinement cells died on the second day. The rain soothed them. Some of them poked their arms out through the bars, letting the dull torrent of water needle their wrists and palms. Their faces had a placid set, the mouths a little open. The eyes were beautiful.

In each of the wards, a fire burnt behind the heavy screens. The men sat around in their chairs or shuffled up and down the room avoiding each other. Some of them investigated again the contents of their pockets, staring at the pebbles, the short pieces of string and scraps of paper with intense concentration. But most of them were about the fire those four days, crouched before the locked screen, watching the flames.

One of them spent the four days watching the sky. He kept away from the others, standing with his back against the wall, staring up at the high windows with the bars over them. Through these he could see a little of the sky and the smudged blue-green tops of two pine trees.

On the morning of the fourth day, two crows came and rocked about on the very top sprigs, cawing mournfully. The man suddenly noticed them, in that his eyes suddenly noticed them. He did not move, nor did his expression change. He stood there, grasping his crippled left arm with his right hand, his face composed of solemn planes and his sagging stance suiting the sloppy drape of his too-large khaki jersey and trousers. One of the men near the fire started singing. His voice creaked through a broken arrangement of notes. Somehow it seemed to suit the weather.

Up in the top of one of the pine trees, the crows rocked a shower of silvery drops down. The lunatic noticed it. He stood with his knees slightly bent, his chest hunched up, working his right hand around the shrivelled wrist. His nails had been cut the day before. He had pale hands and long fingers. The crows dropped from the tree. His eyes followed their black frames. They fell from view. His eyes moved beyond the tree into the small area of sky caught by the glass. There was no blue to be seen, only a low ceiling of gunmetal grey cloud. He kept looking at it, his eyelids seldom flicking. He kept turning his good hand around the wrist of the left hand. The wrist was hairless.

On the fifth day, the Friday, they let the inmates out into the walled exercise yard. He shuffled out into the weak sunlight that was piercing the clouds, his close-cropped blonde hair shivering as the light struck it. His mouth opened a little as the clouds moved away from the sun and a full flush of warmth swept over him, glazing his pink face and catching his nails as he revolved the right hand about the left. He moved unhurriedly to the middle of the yard,
noticing nothing but the clearing bloom of the sky, his own eyes seeming to draw colour from it as more cloud slowly skidded away from the sun. He looked at the sun for several minutes before his hands moved to shade his eyes. Supporting his left hand, he raised it to his forehead, the fingers opening stiffly. He held it there.

He was in that position when the two painters began on the building an hour later. As they set up their gear, the new apprentice looked about the yard.

"Haven't noticed that one before. The one starin' up at the sky over there!" he said to the painter. The short man in overalls turned around.

"Yeah," he said, "the only man in this bin with enough imagination to look for stars in the daytime."

"What was he—before he come here?" the boy asked, cleaning a stick on his trousers.

"A painter."

"Yeah?"

"A fancy painter—an artist—painted religious things—loaves and fishes an' that kind o' stuff."

"How did he go batty?" the boy asked. The painter turned back and began working one of the brushes into his palm.

"Strangled a girl who left him for someone else," he said, watching the boy's face. "Strangled her an' then sewed up 'er lips with thread." The boy gave a slight start.

"Strike!" he said, looking across the yard.

"We'll have to keep an eye on him won't we, while we're workin' 'ere?"

"Nah!" said the painter. "He's harmless. Never laid a hand on anyone since he's bin 'ere."

"How long's that?" the boy wanted to know.

"Close on eight years," the painter told him, prising open one of the tins with his scraper.

"An' what happened to his arm?" the boy asked, beginning to stir his own tin with a slow movement.

"Used to be his good arm, they reckon. The one he painted with. They reckon when he grabbed the girl to do 'er in, she bit 'im on th' wrist an' he's bin rubbin' it ever since."

"Strike!" the boy said, looking over to the lunatic again. "Is that fair dinkum?"

"Couldn't say, but that's what they reckon." He took up the second brush. "Albert's 'is name. Hey Albert!" the painter called, hooking the brush in the air.

"Over here, Albert!"

"Gee, don't call him over!" the boy pleaded. "He might try somethin'"

"Nah he won't!" laughed the painter. "We'll have a lark with 'im. We'll get 'im paintin' this door."

When the lunatic shuffled up to them, the boy stood back, fear in his face. The lunatic stared into the eyes of the painter.

"Here," said the painter, looking around to make certain that none of the attendants were about, "what about having a bash at the old painting again, eh?" He dipped the brush into the light brown paint and offered it to the lunatic, handle first. The lunatic turned his head down and looked at it.

"C'mon," the painter coaxed. "Have a bash. Give us a girl with breasts pointin' nor-east an' nor-west." The lunatic kept his eyes on the brush. The fingers of his bad hand opened and closed.

"Go ON!" the painter said roughly, taking up the good hand and pushing the handle into it. "Grab hold of it." The lunatic's right hand caught hold of the handle. The drops spilled down onto his army boots, blurring spots of colour onto the leather, some striking the sides of the boots in quick exclamation marks. The lunatic examined the brush. The painter rapped on the woodwork.

"On here, Albert!" he coaxed. "Anything y' like!" The lunatic looked up at the sound of the painter's knuckles striking the wood. The painter rapped again,
the lunatic watching his arm go out, the overalls crinkling at the elbow. The lunatic's fingers tightened on the brush. The painter took him by the jersey and pulled him up to the door. The lunatic looked down and began to transfer the brush into his left hand. Then slowly he extended his shrivelled arm. Brush and wall met, trickles of paint racing from the contact. The lunatic began to move his body as if the brush had become cemented to the door. The boy's mouth began to open. "Go on," the painter whispered. Painfully the lunatic worked his shoulder, dragging the arm with it like some stiff pantograph. The brush began to slide along the woodwork leaving a smudgy trail of running paint. The lunatic kept the brush moving. It travelled first in an arc then changed direction to make an ellipse. Then it began to wobble violently. The boy and the painter were watching it, all thoughts gone from their minds. The lunatic brought the brush back to where he had begun. The claw-like hand relaxed, dropping the brush to the gravel. The lunatic began to shuffle back towards the centre of the yard. Both the boy and the painter did not turn to watch him go. They had their eyes rivetted on the thing he had drawn on the wall. Paint threads dribbled from the shape of it, but did not destroy its form. Both of them recognised it simultaneously. It was the painter who first voiced it. "Well, for Christ's sake," he said unbelievingly—"a fish!"

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Young Callisto

In the schoolyard she can feel the soot marking the factories, the hoardings mock her from the street, the start of summer force the trees, chafing axles turn the wheel, the thrust of engines, dust in the breeze, and constellations without number brand the darkness beyond light.

Already she can not remember word and gesture, place and cause, but after her last tears she smiles and will not play with the other girls.

THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT
The Pleasure of Princes

What pleasures have great princes? These: to know
Themselves reputed mad with pride or power;
To speak few words—few words and short bring low
This ancient house, that city with flame devour;

To make old men, their fathers’ enemies,
Drunk on the vintage of the former age;
To have great painters show their mistresses
Naked to the succeeding time; engage

The cunning of able, treacherous ministers
To serve, despite themselves, the cause they hate,
And leave a prosperous kingdom to their heirs
Nursed by the caterpillars of the state;

To keep their spies in good men’s hearts; to read
The malice of the wise, and act betimes;
To hear the Grand Remonstrances of greed,
Led by the pure; cheat justice of her crimes;

To beget worthless sons and, being old,
By starlight climb the battlements, and while
The pacing sentry hugs himself for cold,
Keep vigil like a lover, muse and smile,

And think, to see from the grim castle steep
The midnight city below rejoice and shine:
'There my great demon grumbles in his sleep
And dreams of his destruction, and of mine.'

A. D. HOPE

This poem is reprinted from Poems, 1960, Hamish Hamilton, by permission of the author.
They watch me in the field,
load my cannon, wheel my squadrons of horse,
scribble with jewelled fingers my warring maps,
and now that we rest, they come to me with talk.

We will give
a Medici palace, title and wife;
all these we will give
for thy banner a year on the Tuscan plains.

I watch their eager eyes,
and as I speak, their noble lips quiver.

I am going home, signori,
to the Christ-twisted vines,
to the white chapped fountain,
and to the wheat gold stubble on the brown earth's chin.

For these are my blood;
but now my heart.

She is proud,
like a tall pine in high wind;
she is soft,
like deep snow freshly fallen;
and she is beauty,
like spring fruit, sudden burst or flamed.

These things she is;
and she is mine, signori.

She waits,
and my horse is saddled.
I ride no more in the chalk white dust;
I ride in stars and meteors shower my way.

They bend from the waist,
speak polite regret,
turn, salute in true Court School style,
and leave me in the tent.

They are gone,
and I ope my oystered hand to gaze at thy face,
and my tired eyes moisten,
while my heart melts in golden pain.

P. W. JEFFERY